Claremont School of Theology

A Prophetic Process:

A Re-imagining of the Prophetic Tradition Through the Works of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Alfred North Whitehead

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Preface

Marc Ellis once made a particularly poignant observation. He stated that the "task before Jews in every generation is to know enough to ask the right questions for their time."[1] As important as this observation is, in taking a hard look at it, I can't help but ask another question. In looking at my own generation, do I know enough to ask the right questions for me?

My questions have always revolved around my identification as a Jew. Questions of Jewish identity are complex. There are the religious identifications, the cultural identifications, and perhaps unique to Judaism, there are ethnic identifications. I am a great example of this complexity. I come from a mixed religious household; my mother was Jewish, and my father was Irish Catholic. According to Jewish tradition, lineage is matriarchal. If your mother is Jewish, then you are one-hundred percent Jewish. Therefore, from the perspective of ethnicity, I am completely Jewish. But what exactly does that identity mean to me, especially since my religious and cultural identities are not so easily calculated?

With both parents wanting to keep a portion of their own traditions alive within their children, I grew up in a very interesting household. On the cultural front, it took only once for me to learn that you don't ask your fellow students in Hebrew School what they got for Christmas. The strange looks from my peers taught me all I needed to know about sharing my unique background. Many would assume that it's a good thing to come from a mixed background (whether it be race, religion, or whatever). The assumption is, since you come from two different backgrounds, you have a place within both. But, as anyone who comes from a mixed background knows, the opposite is true. Each side rejects you because they cannot accept

[1] Marc Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future: With Wiesel, Buber, Heschel, Arendt, Levinas* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 106.

the other half of you. This reality eventually becomes quite negative. No matter where you go, there is always some part of you that is not ok. This lack of acceptance in the Jewish community resulted in my rejection of it. I made a deal with my mother at age thirteen, I would go through with my Bar Mitzvah, if she would allow me to consider it a graduation. Once it was completed, there was no expectation for me to go back. So, my cultural connections with Judaism stopped at age thirteen. Thus, culturally, identifying as a Jew is problematic. As a young adult, if I met someone who was Jewish, I would often keep my Jewish identity secret – not because I was ashamed, but out of expediency. They would expect me to know things, and half the time I had no idea what they were talking about.

In addition to this, a very practical problem arises when attempting raise a child in two traditions. With the difficulties of balancing two traditions in the same household, the result is often that neither tradition can be focused on too much. In my household, this reality translated to a rather non-religious, or secular, upbringing. I can definitely say that I was raised more Jewish than Catholic, but the traditions of each were always encapsulated in the modern scientific/secular worldview. This made identifying with Judaism religiously problematic as well. In the end, all of this adds up to a rather complicated identity. I am one-hundred percent Jewish, with almost no connection to Judaism at all. This leaves me as someone who is in constant tension and conflict, a person who deeply desires a religious connection but can't connect with any religion.

This conflicted nature seemed to both fuel and sabotage my connection to Judaism. Although I am quite proud of my ethnic identity, I kept my cultural and religious identity at arm's length. Although I am secular in my world view, I cannot ignore a call to my religious tradition. Thus, I am seemingly caught in a contradiction. I have a strong desire to reconnect

with my Jewish tradition, but a return to the Jewish tradition of my upbringing would be impossible.

Then one day I read the words of Emmanuel Levinas, in his short article "A Religion for Adults." He said that the religious journey must always "entail the risk of atheism."[2] To truly connect with and understand the divine, we must first reject what we are given and leave it behind. In doing so, there is always the risk of never finding our way back. But if we do, our sense and understanding of God will be truly religious. After reading that passage, two things occurred to me. First, there must be a reason why I continually find my religious investigations turning to Judaism. Perhaps my particular relation to my tradition was not so strange after all. Second, if Levinas' religious journey applied to me, then I have already traveled the path of rejection. If Levinas is correct, then perhaps it was time to find my way back.

As I pondered a return, several important questions emerged. What do I bring with me upon my return, and, with the person I have become, what form of Judaism can I connect and identify with? Basically, if I were to identify as Jewish, what would that Judaism look like? In pursuing an answer, the biblical stories of Jacob and Job stick out for me, mostly because of how each character relates to God and the implications that relation means to a belief in God. The story of Jacob is a short, strange story in Genesis, where Jacob wrestles with a stranger until daybreak. With dawn approaching, even after Jacob's hip was broken, Jacob prevailed until the man asked to be let go. Only after being blessed, does Jacob release his assailant. After the ordeal, the man renames Jacob “Israel” – one who wrestles or contends with God. Although there are many interpretations of this strange story, in Jewish understanding, the man Jacob

[2] Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Sean Hand (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 15.

wrestles with was indeed God. What fascinates me about this story are the metaphorical implications. The image of humanity wrestling with God is powerful on many levels. For myself, the power of the image comes with the idea that God is a force to be wrestled with. It allows for the possibility to question what we think we know about God and truly struggle with any aspect of this idea that does not fit our reality.

The story of Job intrigues me for similar reasons. Most of the story is basically a debate on how to understand God in the face of tragedy. What do we do when bad things happen to good people? How can we understand God in these moments? Several things fascinate me about this story. First, it allows for the conversation in the first place. Every friend that visited Job argued for a different theological position when it came to God and tragedy. My second fascination comes from the fact that Job rejected them all. In these moments, Job is wrestling with God. Job, with all the tragedy that befell him, had every right to scream into the whirlwind, "What were you thinking?! I deserve an answer!" Of course, the answer that Job got from the whirlwind, rather effectively, put him in his place. But the fact that the questions could be asked in the first place, that wrestling with God is possible, speaks volumes to me. I have found that, when it comes to my own Jewish identity, this wrestling lies at the heart of it. I must be able to question the foundations of my own belief system. There is too much that doesn't fit, and the stakes are too high not to seek answers to our most important questions.

These stories inform my perspective on what kind of Judaism I can return to. I rejected and turned away from my tradition a long time ago. As I ponder return, my journey abroad has taught me what I need to make it back. First and foremost, I need the freedom to wrestle. I must be allowed to grapple and struggle with God, the covenant, and all aspects of Judaism. I need to be able to constantly question and confront. In my mind, this is the only way we can continue to

grow. I also need an ethical tradition based on engagement and concern, not just between God and the Jews, but between Jews and the world in which we live. This means I need an ethical tradition that does more than teach how to be ethical and moral for oneself. It needs to participate in ethical activity. It needs to be engaged and concerned about the world. Finally, I need a spiritual connection to God and Judaism that does not contradict my experience. I need a framework that fits and works with the secular/scientific worldview, not against it. My religious worldview has always conflicted with my secular worldview. The meeting of the two cannot happen without removing this conflict. Several of these criteria already speak to Judaism as an identity, but I need all of them. I am Jewish, but that does not mean I can easily connect with Judaism. To be a form of Judaism that I can come back to, it needs to allow me to scream into the whirlwind, but I also need a different answer in return.

Marc Ellis recognized that Jews had to ask the right questions for their time. In response, I recognized that I had to ask the right questions for me. I suspect, in the end, that the two are not so different. In recognizing those who came before him, Ellis also acknowledged that each generation "will be transcended by the next generation of Jewish thinkers as they acquire the knowledge to respond to the challenges of their time."[3] That is the exact goal of this project. In my own search for a reconnection to my cultural and religious heritage, I intend to transcend the previous generation and challenge Judaism, in my time.

[3] Marc Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression: Response to Martin Kavka," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 95, no. 1 (2012): 78-84.

Introduction

To challenge the current state of Judaism, we must first find out what that state is. Let us begin by exploring the thoughts of several Jewish thinkers and their take on the current state of Judaism. First, we have Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner. In an article submitted to *Tikkun* magazine, Neusner issued the following comment about American Jewish institutions: "Among the six great Judaisms of the first third of the twentieth century, all have lost nerve and none retains vitality."[4] He then went on to criticize each institution of American Jewry. Of the Western Orthodox tradition, he stated that they "answer questions about living by the Torah in modern society that few people wish to ask anymore."[5] He went on to say that institutions of Conservative Judaism today "are weak," and that they "do not enjoy the financial support of Jewish lay people, and much of the Conservative rabbinate is alienated from the movement's central institution."[6] Finally, he saved his most scathing remarks for Reform Judaism. Once the power house of American Jewry, Reform Judaism "has lost the source of energy in the prophetic tradition of Judaism"; he adds further that "if I had to choose two words to characterize the contemporary state of Reform Judaism, they would be sloth and envy."[7] These are very strong remarks against the major institution of Judaism in America. By bluntly putting his observations out there, Neusner is signaling a wake-up call to American Jews. These institutions are losing their way because Jews in America are no longer supporting them. Although he makes challenging observations, what Neusner does not explore in his article is "why." Why is it that

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[4] Jacob Neusner, "Can Judaism Survive the Twentieth Century?" in *TIKKUN: To Heal, Repair and Transform the World*, ed. Michael Lerner. (Jerusalem: Tikkun books, 1992) 504.

[5] Neusner, "Can Judaism Survive," 504.

[6] Neusner, "Can Judaism Survive," 504.

[7] Neusner, "Can Judaism Survive," 504.

so many American Jews have become disenfranchised with their institutions? Why have so many Jews in America lost connection with their tradition?

For the clues needed to answer these questions, we can turn to Rabbi Levi Olan and Marc Ellis. Rabbi Olan addresses the current state of Judaism in his article "The Prophetic Faith in a Secular Age." He observes that any religious response to our world "must be intelligible within the culture to which it addresses itself," and that "religion disappears as an active phenomenon when it fails to heed the demands of cultural development." The issue is that "[t]he present cultural climate is not receptive to the classical view of the universe."[8] According to Olan, so many contemporary Jews are willing to leave their religion behind because that religion no longer means anything to them. The classical theological framework simply no longer fits into the contemporary scientific/secular worldview embraced my so many Jewish Americans today.

Why so many Jews today feel disconnected from their tradition may be a contemporary reaction to a system that was mainly built on the rationality of Greek philosophy. As with Christianity, Judaism in Europe was eventually exposed to the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and other Greeks. And like Christianity, the rationality and materialist worldview of the Greeks became the philosophical foundation for many aspects of Jewish thinking.

In the case of Judaism in Europe, however, there were other motivations to reshape the tradition in a more rational way. "After centuries of persecution and prejudice against Jews, under the influence of these enlightened ideas many felt the need to be accepted as Jews within Western European Christian culture."[9] Coming out of the Emancipation and into the

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[8] Levi Olan, "The Prophetic Faith in a Secular Age," in *Jewish Theology and Process Thought*, ed. Sandra Lubarsky and David Griffin (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 25.

[9] J. H. Laener, *Jewish Mysticism: An Introduction*. (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 2.

Enlightenment era, many Jewish thinkers felt a great need to "update" their tradition. This great push came out of the need for acceptance among contemporary Europeans. Many Jewish thinkers of the time felt that a more "Enlightened" or rational understanding of Judaism would fit better with the other more rational viewpoints of Europeans.

In this hard-driven effort to rationalize Judaism, all "non-rational" aspects of the tradition were seen as holding Judaism back and thus needed to be re-evaluated. As a result "It was particularly the rational aspects of Judaism that were brought to the fore. . . Judaism was the rational, abstract, and monotheistic religion par excellence."[10] As a consequence of this, "everything that was not rational or not abstract in character was viewed as in fact non-Jewish."[11] Extending back to the writings of Maimonides, Jewish philosophers began a process that would eventually lead to a hyper-rational belief system and worldview. Based on the static and rational views of the Greeks, this new system left little room for the more emotional, or what we might call spiritual, aspects of Judaism.

The very rationalistic and materialistic worldviews that lay at the heart of Judaism moving forward were an expression of the overall worldviews of many people in Europe at the time. These Jewish thinkers were simply putting Judaism in line with the prevailing worldview. As a result of this, however, these thinkers started Judaism down the same path as many Christians had done before them. This enlightened path, unfortunately, is one of alienation and estrangement, and eventually brought feelings of discontent and disconnection. As time went on, people began to realize that this highly rational view of the world did not resonate with their individual experiences of reality.

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[10] Laener, *Jewish Mysticism*, 2.
[11] Laener, *Jewish Mysticism*, 2.

Fast forward a hundred fifty years or so: what began as a re-envisioning of Judaism to make it more acceptable to the principles of the time, has now created philosophical problems too large to be ignored. More than that, the views of how the world functions have also changed, thus creating an even larger disconnect. Today's conception of God and science no longer fits the philosophy of Aristotle (nor other Greeks) that "saved" Judaism in the 19th century.

Most of modern Western culture has confronted this particular issue. Because the worldview we are given philosophically no longer fits with the reality we experience, a disconnect begins on a deeply emotional level. Since people begin to feel this disconnection between their experiences and what they hold most dear (belief systems), a sense of alienation occurs. This has very negative consequences for traditional religious systems that attempt to explain how the world works according a structure that does not align with our experience of reality. "Estranged from the divine, from nature, and from the intimate ties of community, the modern person grew skeptical of, or hostile to, metaphysics and theological systems." Furthermore, "religious symbols, which had once provided the basic paradigms for organizing and structuring ideas and experiences, were now viewed as alien or, at best, ineffectual."[12] Due to the disconnect between their philosophical worldview and how they experience reality, people begin to lose faith in the structures that promote their worldview. As a result, religions and their symbols become the objects of rebellion. Many of these individuals "held religion to be especially responsible for the alienation of the modern individual. Fostering an illusory system of meaning, religion stifles the creative actualization of the individual and perpetuates conditions of socio-political oppression."[13] With so much negativity created by the conflict of worldviews,

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[12] Laurence J. Silberstein, "The Renewal of Jewish Spirituality: Two Views," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*, ed. Arthur Green. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987), 402.

[13] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 402.

it makes sense why so many modern individuals would start to leave their religious institutions behind.

Judaism, of course, was not immune to such negativity. "The process of alienation and loss of meaning that characterize Western culture in general have also eroded the foundations of traditional Jewish religious faith. Modern Jews, immersed in Western culture, have increasingly found that religious forms and beliefs no longer provide an effective framework of meaning."[14] Although current Jewish institutions and structures have lost their meaning for many, this does not infer that these people have stopped looking for meaning all together.

Olan explains that, in light of things like nuclear fission, quantum physics and the observations of postmodern thinkers, our reality seems to be one of constant change and processes. Olan states that the "basic characters of reality – relationality and indeterminacy – comprise a unitary, integrated whole of systemic interdependence, solidarity, and common destiny for all of its inhabitants and components."[15] In our secular society, our understanding of how the world works is shaped by scientific exploration and discovery. Although the average American may not understand how nuclear fission or quantum physics works, it has become more apparent to the average American that the world cannot be run by components that are static and independent. For Olan, it has become obvious that our reality "is not yesterday's matter but today's relationships, processes, and events." He goes on to state that "[i]nstead of an edifice of hard building block, ultimate reality is relational," and that "indeterminacy is an integral character of matter. Alternatives and chance are inherently part of reality."[16] Whether we are looking at the environment and ecosystems or the human body and human relationships,

[14] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 405.
[15] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 27.
[16] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 27.

the world-view of American culture today is now shaped by the understanding that things are in fact related to each other. As much as we attempt to isolate different aspects of our reality, a more functional understanding of that reality actually comes from the knowledge that these things are interconnected and interrelated. This is also true of indeterminacy. Out of this relational understanding, it is also clear that everything in our world changes. The more we investigate our universe, the more we find that change is the only constant. Olan argues that relationality and indeterminacy are better suited to describe the universe we live in, because they paint a more complete picture that serves as the basis for our overall world-view.

These observations lead to serious theological consequences for Jewish thinking. With this emerging world-view, a theological perspective based in a static, perfect, never changing, all powerful God no longer fits. Thus, the classical view of God contained within Jewish theology is no longer functional for modern American Jews. Without theological backing, daily participation becomes meaningless. Eventually, individuals stop seeing the point. As Olan puts it, "The mood of our postmodern culture is inhospitable to this classical theology in which God can either cause a holocaust or prevent it."[17]

Marc Ellis offers a different take on the current state of Judaism, but his conclusions are just as severe. For Ellis, questions raised by Neusner involve critiquing the very heart of Judaism – the Jewish ethical tradition itself. In light of the actions of the Jewish state, and the reasons Jews in and outside of Israel use to justify them, Ellis asks a stunning question, "Is there anything ethical left in the Jewish life worth saving?"[18] For Ellis, there seems to be a clear disconnect between the tradition founded on the implementation of ethics and justice and the

[17] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 28.
[18] Marc Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic: Israel's Ancient Wisdom Re-presented* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 4.

actions of those who represent that particular tradition. Ellis observes that "more and more Jews believe that the Jewish ethical tradition has been outsourced. It exists in a conceptual universe that bears less and less relation to the facts of Jewish life."[19] The facts of contemporary Jewish life, for Jews in the United States as well as Israel, have shifted to ones of privilege and power. Ellis begins to ask questions about whether Jews in the US and Israel, from a privileged perspective, connect with their ethical roots at all.

I offer that all three of these perspectives are connected and present a stark reality of the current state of Jewish thinking. With a religious tradition that is described as "ethical monotheism," it stands to reason that the two most important aspects of that religion are the understanding of God and the role of ethics. Many could argue that ethics and the Jewish notion of God are what connect the Jewish people to their tradition. This is a very big problem if you take Olan and Ellis seriously. According to Olan, the Jewish conception of God no longer speaks and connects with the worldview of modern American Jews. Additionally, according to Ellis, due to their positions of power, Jews in America and Israel have lost their connection to the ethical roots of Judaism. If this is indeed the case, then the conclusions of Neusner start to make sense. There simply is nothing left to connect Jews of today with their tradition.

In the face of this reality, Ellis does offer a possible next step for Jewish thinking. In response to his own question of whether there is anything ethical left worth saving, Ellis' answer is yes. Not only is there something left, but what is left must be cultivated into the next phase of Jewish thought. Ellis calls for the rediscovery of the Jewish ethical tradition found in the Jewish prophetic. "'Jewish ethics' is the modern way of conceptualizing an ancient and more profoundly

[19] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 3.

troubling foundation of Jewish identity. I believe this ancient and troubling foundation is the prophetic."[20] Contained within the prophetic are the ethical roots necessary to meet the challenges faced by Judaism today. Ellis observes that "there is no getting around the prophetic. The prophetic stalks the world. For better and for worse, Jews are the people who embody the prophetic as an ancient tradition in the modern world."[21] Returning to the prophetic means that the Jewish community in Israel (as well as the US) can have the tools needed to take a hard look at themselves and critique their own perspectives. This is why the prophetic is so necessary as the next stage of Jewish thinking. I believe Ellis is correct: the prophetic could be vital to Jewish thinking today. It can be the catalyst that breaks through the apathy felt by so many contemporary Jews, and infuse meaning back into Jewish life.

Turning to the prophetic, however, does have one major problem. It may address the ethical crisis facing Judaism today, but it does little to address Olan's critique. In fact, Olan's critique has massive and far-reaching consequences for the prophetic. The Jewish conception of God (as with the other Abrahamic traditions) is the center of an interrelated and interlocking belief system. Olan states that "the central meaning of the prophetic faith is best described as 'ethical monotheism' and is based upon the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai."[22] Returning to the term "ethical monotheism," it may seem like a straight-forward concept, but in Judaism it is a rather dynamic term that holds the entire system together. First, it means that there are two things at the center of prophetic faith. One of them is "ethical" and the other is "theism." In a lot of ways "ethical" is not an adjective but a verb. It is an action, a "doing" as well as a state of "being." For the prophetic faith, being ethical is an action you must

[20] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 5.
[21] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 6.
[22] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 28.

consciously perform. "Theism," of course, refers to the prophetic understanding of God. This encompasses the Jewish framework of God and God's relation to Jewish people.

In the prophetic tradition, the concepts of "ethical" and "theism" are built on each other and each could not exist without the other, or if they did, you would no longer be in the framework of Judaism. Prophetic faith understands "ethical (mono)theism" to denote a dynamic relation between God and humanity. The concept of ethics in the prophetic would not make sense outside of the framework of God and God's relation to humanity. This is why the covenant is so important – it sets up the relation. The theistic framework is what gives ethical action meaning. Thus, if you remove the theistic framework, the impetus for ethical action goes with it.

In the end, Olan says that "no matter how appealing the ethical dimension of the prophetic faith is to modern secular man, the theological form in which it is framed is unacceptable."[23] If this is the case, then the prophetic faith cannot sustain itself. If we throw God out of the equation, then we give up all meaning behind the covenant. If we give up the covenant, then we give up all reason to be ethical, since being ethical is our side of the covenant. Because ethical action is the basis of prophetic understanding, it makes no sense without the covenant. The Jewish notion of God, the covenant, and the prophetic are all interrelated. If, for the reasons presented by Olan, the Jewish notion of God is no longer viable, then the covenant and the prophetic suffer the same fate and would ultimately drain all meaning and purpose behind being ethical at all.

If we are going to answer Ellis' call to rediscover the prophetic tradition as the next phase of Jewish thought, Olan's critique makes it clear that we are going to need a reinterpretation of

[23] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 29.

the prophetic faith. Taking both Ellis and Olan together, that reinterpretation has two requirements. First, from Ellis' point of view, it must uphold the ethical tradition contained within the prophetic movement. Second, from Olan's point of view, it must function in a system that does not conflict with the current scientific and cultural outlook held my most American Jews today. This means any attempt at a reinterpretation of the prophetic must account for the theological as well as the ethical. As a consequence of their particular structural relations, the reinterpretation of one will automatically demand a reinterpretation of the other. Both must be addressed on their own terms as well as how they relate and work together.

In order to fulfill the requirements of both Olan and Ellis in seeking a new prophetic, I propose that a Process Prophetic is needed. In order to accomplish this, I will turn to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and Abraham Joshua Heschel. By turning to Whitehead, a Process Prophetic could hold up against modern theological critiques. I turn to Heschel because any interpretation of the prophetic tradition must also sustain, motivate, and encourage ethical action and justice. With the combination of both we can find a current and sustainable vision of the prophetic. Each perspective complements the other and creates a unique vision that re-imagines what the Jewish prophetic could be.

Heschel is necessary because he offers a powerful ethical model of the prophetic. He puts forth strong ethical components that are vital to prophetic understanding. By sticking with rabbinic Judaism, however, he keeps the traditional concept of God intact. This being the case, Heschel's notion of God falls under Olan's critique. Heschel's theism could pass Olan's critique if we are able to incorporate key elements from Whitehead's process-relational system. Whitehead's philosophy can add the relational and indeterminate elements that would allow the prophetic to fit into the worldview of American Jews today. Whitehead's model of God

provides a framework that can address the theistic elements needed for the prophetic while overcoming the limits of the classical theological view. The weakness of Whitehead's philosophy, however, lies in the ethical dimension. By basing his system on aesthetics, ethics is often relegated to a minor status in Process thinking. This lack of focus on ethics in Whitehead's philosophy can be corrected by adding key elements from Heschel's ethical model. In the end, this new prophetic is where Process and Judaism meet. By interpreting each one through the lens of the other, we will be able to see a transformation in both. The goal is to create a process prophetic that can meet the demands of both Olan and Ellis. It needs to be a prophetic interpretation that re-imagines the theological without sacrificing the ethical. Only when both needs are met can we proceed with Ellis' call to make the prophetic the next stage in Jewish thinking.

I will introduce the concept of the "Prophetic Aim" as the core element needed to re-imagine the prophetic. This aim will be extracted from Whitehead's process-relational system and will serve as the transformative power of the future on our ethical judgment and decision making in the present. Once we understand that future ideals can motivate ethical action in the present, we open the door to a source of ethical purpose that can be sustained regardless of the time and place. Regardless of how things may change, as long as future ideals are aimed for, motivation for ethical action exists in the present. This means we can sustain ethical motivation within Heschel's system without relying on the static and fixed perspective of a more traditional framework. This aim adds to the ethical elements in Whitehead by pushing ethical motivation to the foreground without violating his aesthetic foundations. The concept of the Prophetic Aim transforms both Whitehead and Heschel to create a sustainable system that can promote ethical action in today's complex world. In doing so, we can find a vision of the prophetic that

addresses both the theistic and ethical dimensions, and is able to integrate into our current worldview, without losing those key elements that makes the prophetic faith what it is.

Olan validates the possibility of a re-interpretation by pointing out that the prophetic tradition is uniquely suited to take on such a task. Of all the different traditions within Judaism, the prophetic tradition is the most accepting of re-interpretation and change. It's perspective is based on confronting what does not work and allowing for re-interpretations to fix it, even if that re-interpretation is focused on the covenant itself.

Olan states that, "[a] principle of openness characterizes the prophets' approach to the covenant." This means that they "were free to criticize the popular view of God which tradition had preserved and jealously protected," and that "this freedom introduced the possibility that their own theological formulation, as well as any other, may be critically examined and, if found wanting, discarded."[24] As the ones who felt compelled to question society, the prophets forcefully challenged the standards and norms of their day. Through challenging the status quo, the prophets were able to re-formulate their understanding of God and Judaism. As long as the essence of the covenant was maintained, the prophets were free re-imagine their theological framework to fit the needs of their time. Thus, according to Olan, when it came to the Covenant, "the prophets did not invent it," but they "interpreted and re-interpreted it as changing historical situations demanded."[25] They understood that any standard, even if originally positive, can end up being destructive if it no longer fits with what it was intended for.

This did not mean, however, that they threw everything out. The prophets understood very well the primacy of the covenant for their tradition. Through all of their criticisms, the

[24] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 29.
[25] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 28.

prophets "never discarded the spirit of the original covenant in which the fundamental principles were spelled out."[26] For this reason, a tension existed between preserving the meaning of the covenant but allowing its implementation to be challenged. This tension is exactly where the prophet operates and it leaves open the possibility for change. As Olan goes on to explain, "This openness allows men to question and to alter every theism, so long as the meaning of the original covenant is preserved."[27]

I argue that this is the very perspective we need if we are to confront the situation with Judaism in our own time. Olan believes that "relationality is at the heart of the prophetic faith," and he argues that "the essence of the covenant is retained and postmodern culture accepts it; in fact, it strongly supports it."[28] If the classical view of the universe no longer fits our experience, then it can no longer function as a viable model for our religious systems. I believe that the tension that exemplifies the prophetic tradition can be applied to the tradition itself. Within the prophetic movement, we are free to form new theological formulations that fit with and speak to the realities of our time. If we are going to follow Ellis in turning to the prophetic, I conclude then, that we need to go prophetic on the prophetic. That is exactly what this discussion is going to do. We are going to act as prophets in our re-interpretation of the prophetic tradition.

Chapter One will explore why we turn to Whitehead's process-relational system in the first place. To satisfy Olan's critique, we need a system that is relational and indeterminate. Chapter One breaks down the elements of Whitehead's system to illustrate the relational and changing nature of our reality. The most important element of his system for our project is his model for God. Olan's critique is based in the fact that the classical view of God no longer fits

[26] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 28.
[27] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 29.
[28] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 29.

with our postmodern point of view. This being the case, our interpretation of the prophetic needs a model for God that can account for our relational and ever-changing reality. Since the concept of God is the pivotal element holding the prophetic faith together, reshaping our understanding of God is of paramount concern. This leads to the importance of understanding how Whitehead's notion of God adds the necessary components of relationality and indeterminacy to the prophetic system.

God plays a major role in how value emerges in the world. For this reason, God must play a major role in the Prophetic Aim. In Whitehead's system, all occasions of experience are purposive, and they all aim at the attainment of greater value. The goal of this chapter is to explore the reason why. What drives experience toward more complexity, intensity, and value? What is the mechanism that drives the purpose toward that particular aim?

Through the initial aim, God introduces alternatives (novelty) to every occasion, thus urging it to more complexity and higher intensity. Through the consequent and primordial natures, God gives to the world the ideal possibilities of achieving greater complexity (thus greater value) in the context of their existence. With the primordial vision and through the initial aim, God offers each aspect of the world the most ideal version of itself and the universe in general. This offering of the ideal leads directly to the Prophetic Aim. God offers the ideal of the world and the Prophetic Aim makes us responsible for meeting it.

We begin Chapter Two with the exploration of why Heschel's version of the prophetic fits best with our project. The Jewish prophetic tradition traces its origins all the way back to the prophets themselves. Between then and now there have been many different versions of the prophetic and the role it plays in Jewish thinking. I turn to Heschel because he sets down a powerful image of the prophetic which directly addresses the ethical and theistic components of

the tradition. He provides the model of what needs to be found in Whitehead to make a Process Prophetic work. The core perspective of the prophets was not about telling the future, it was about challenging the present. The prophets felt compelled to question society. In doing this they forcefully challenged the standards and norms of their day.

The primary point of using Heschel's notion of the prophetic is his focus on the ethical dimension. The "ethical dimension" for Heschel defines the motivation and actions of the prophet. Within Heschel's writings there are three major areas that can be identified: moral action, justice, and ethical obligation. All three are related to each other and form the backbone of prophetic ethical action. In the end, they come together and become the driving force behind the prophetic perspective.

In addressing Heschel's theism, there is a theological framework that holds his ethical understanding together. Thus, the "ethical dimension" described above is held up by Heschel's "theistic dimension," or his concept of God. This conception is based on his notion of God's "pathos." By calling God "the God of pathos," Heschel is setting up a relational understanding of God. He is establishing God as one who is deeply connected with humanity and cares about human activity. Heschel goes on to state God's pathos equals God's ethos. By equating God's connection with humanity with God's pathos, he is saying that God's fundamental character is defined by God's caring for the people of Israel.

As powerful as Heschel's vision of the prophetic is, it runs straight into Olan's critique because it is still based the classical theological framework. Heschel, ultimately, wanted to embrace the rabbinic tradition, not push it away. To do this, his vision of the prophetic and the God of pathos still had to fit within that particular framework. As a consequence, Heschel's attempt at extracting meaning eventually falls on deaf ears. In order to make Heschel's prophetic

vision truly meaningful in our current culture, we need another source that can fit with our post-modern perspective. This is why Whitehead's process-relational system is so necessary.

The next two chapters offer an in-depth explanation of how Whitehead's philosophy can be used to facilitate the needs of both the ethical and theistic dimensions required for a Process Prophetic. In Chapter Three, we begin to interpret Whitehead through the lens of Heschel's ethical criteria. Starting with moral action and justice, we extract from Whitehead's philosophy the ethical components needed to sustain moral action and justice as defined by Heschel. Chapter Three also explores the possible limits of Whitehead's moral philosophy. Although I argue that moral action and justice can work in his system, a problem does arise when it comes to incorporating moral obligation into Whitehead's system.

Chapter Four explores a new interpretation of Whitehead's moral philosophy that fits with Heschel's ethical and theistic dimensions for the prophetic. The goal is to illustrate that a future/present relation exists within Whitehead's aesthetic system and that this relation can creatively transform the meaning and perspective of moral obligation in Whitehead. Through a reinterpretation of Whitehead's definition of morality, we find that the future creates the purpose in the present. It can be argued that the future has an ethical influence on the present. Basically, the ideals set the parameters for certain moral judgments, but those judgments are made in the present. Thus, future ideals influence our ethical actions now. Through this commitment to ethical ideals (presented in the future context), an ethical aim is created. From that aim we get ethical purpose. Thus, the future gives us an ethical purpose that can be felt in the present and emerges out of the system itself.

Once we understand that the future has an ethical influence on the present, then we can reinterpret Whitehead through Heschel's notions of moral action, justice, and obligation. In light

of the future/present relationship, it must be understood that all three aspects of Heschel's "ethical dimension" are different parts of the same dynamic activity. All three have to do with the same action. To seek justice is a moral action. Moral action participates in justice. All of this culminates in an obligation to participate in the future/present relation.

This chapter also argues for what I call the "Prophetic Aim," which illustrates that Whitehead's metaphysics can be understood as prophetic in nature. Emerging out of the future/present relation, this aim becomes the defining element of the ethical dimension needed for a new perspective on the prophetic in Process thinking. Like all aims in Whitehead, this aim urges us to a certain goal or end, but this aim is ethical in nature. It gives us drive and purpose to an ethical "end." This is where a prophetic nature can be found in Whitehead. Through this future orientation, an ethical responsibility emerges. As long as a purpose exists in relation to an aim, the future will always have influence on our control of the present through our decision making.

By completing a model that is fully intelligible to our current culture, the meaning to human existence becomes possible for American Jews. This is the heart of the transformation of the prophetic faith. The reasons behind the loss of vitality and energy within the prophetic tradition have been overcome and transformed into a source of vitality and energy. The Prophetic Aim offers a new source of purpose and meaning that re-invents the prophetic outlook.

Chapter five illustrates how Heschel and Whitehead come together to revitalize and re-energize the prophetic tradition. Prophecy usually refers to predicting the future. But for the prophets, any foretelling of the future was to promote action in the present. Through the Prophetic Aim, the role of the prophet stays the same. The prophet still has a vision of the future that has everything to do with the present, but there is just a primary shift in perspective. The

prophets' vision of the future is not a prediction, it is a motivation for change. It is a vision to transform the present. Moral action, justice, and obligation all participate in the same activity – transforming our present situations for the better. This is the shift in perspective necessary to re-energize the prophetic tradition.

To accomplish this, I am going to look at the current state of post-Holocaust Jewish thought. The pitfalls illustrated by Neusner, Olan, and Ellis directly apply to post-Holocaust thinking. Thus, the re-imagined interpretation of the prophetic applies to post-Holocaust thinking as well. More specifically, I will go back to Ellis and explore his take on the current state of the post-Holocaust conversation and examine his call to return to the prophetic. Ellis argues that the "Jews of Conscience" are the modern embodiment of the Jewish prophetic. I agree with Ellis and will show how his "Jews of Conscience" fit into the reinterpretation of the prophetic through the Prophetic Aim.

Chapter 1 – Why Whitehead?

In addressing the need to find an alternative to the classical view of the universe, Olan did offer a possible alternative – the relational system presented by Alfred North Whitehead. Although he did not fully explore how it would work, he did suggest that Whitehead's system would be a better fit with our current scientific and cultural outlook. I believe Olan's observation is correct. By incorporating both relationality and indeterminacy into his process-relational scheme, Whitehead was able to build a metaphysic that justifies a modern/scientific point of view. Because of this, Whitehead's metaphysical scheme may be the best option as the foundation for a new understanding of the prophetic.

Olan's observation about Whitehead fits into a larger argument as to why we need to turn to a new model in the first place. Going back to Olan's observation that our reality "is not yesterday's matter but today's relationships, processes, and events," Olan is pointing out that our old system of understanding reality is giving way to a new one.[29] The mechanistic model of the universe that we inherited from Enlightenment thinkers no longer holds up to scrutiny. Implicit in Olan's argument is the need to move beyond modern notions of how things work and why. Olan hints at this issue when he said, "The mood of our *postmodern* [emphasis added] culture is inhospitable to this classical theology."[30] By using the term "postmodern," Olan understands that we are shifting out of the model given to us by modernity. Implied in Olan's critique is the argument against the modern point of view and for a postmodern conception of reality. Thus, the argument that the prophetic needs a new model in order to be meaningful to American Jews

[29] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 27.
[30] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 28.

today is framed in the larger context of the tension between modern and postmodern notions of reality.

This is where Whitehead comes in. Whitehead is unique in the fact that he challenges the modern conception of reality, but he does not completely reject it. In this way, he could be understood as a postmodern thinker, but not is the same way of the "postmodernists" of the 1970s and 80s. Whitehead is better understood as a middle perspective, holding the tension between challenging the system, but maintaining it as well.

On the one side, Whitehead is definitely challenging the staples of modern understanding set down by Descartes, Hume, and Kant. David Griffin argues that Whitehead is a "type" of postmodern philosopher. In his book, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy,* Griffin states that, "[f]rom a Whiteheadian perspective, it lies at the heart of the task of postmodern thinking to overcome the assumptions that lead to the modern dualism between the ideas affirmed in theory and those presupposed in practice."[31] These assumptions include the mind-body dualism of Descartes, the sensationist view of perception of Hume, the separation of the phenomena and noumena by Kant, as well as the overall mechanistic view of nature. These views create a model of reality that is static, separate, independent, and predictable. Whitehead challenges all of these scenarios, which puts him in the postmodern context. He argues that these assumptions build a perception of reality that works great in theory, but no longer fits in practice.[32]

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[31] David Rey Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy: An Argument for it Contemporary Relevance* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 8.

[32] There are several Western philosophers who questioned the tenants of modernism before Whitehead. The most notable (and who Whitehead himself praised) was William James. James' focus on non-duality and relationality would put him the closest to Whitehead's philosophy of organism.

On the other side of the spectrum, however, Whitehead should not be equated with the later postmodernists, or what Griffin calls the "dominant image" of postmodernism.[33] By challenging modern assumption, Whitehead may have similarities with philosophers like Derrida, Deluze, or Foucault, but there are major differences. Whitehead does not attempt to deconstruct, or flat out reject, the entire modern project. There are aspects of the modern perspective that Whitehead sees as valuable. This is where the tension in Whitehead comes into play and ultimately puts him in between modern and postmodern philosophers.

One particular area is Whitehead's defense of empirical rationalism. From his perspective, we must always insist that ideas are not to be "accepted on the basis of authority but are instead to be defended solely on the basis of experience and reason."[34] Whitehead sees experience and reason as valuable and necessary in the construction of valid ideas and concepts. This position puts him at odds with other postmodern perspectives that reject rationalism and metaphysics.

Another area is Whitehead's position on rationalism. On the one hand Whitehead admits that rationalism "is the method by which advance is made within the limits of particular sciences." But on the other hand, he states that "this limited success must not encourage attempts to frame ambitious schemes expressive of the general nature of things."[35] As much as Whitehead understands that need for the rationalist perspective, he also understands the dangers of dogmatism. In the end, Whitehead argues that "[t]he verification of a rationalistic scheme is to be sought in its general success, and not in the peculiar certainty, or initial clarity, of its first

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[33] Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 12.
[34] Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 13.
[35] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: Corrected Edition*, ed. David Griffin (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 14.

principles."[36] Like other postmodernists, Whitehead critiques modernity for its emphasis on rationalism, but rather than reject it completely, he understands its usefulness as well as its limitations.

This middle ground is also extended to Whitehead's use of metaphysics. Because of their rejection of larger narratives, many postmodern thinkers reject the notion of metaphysics. Whitehead, however, argues for the usefulness of metaphysics as long as we understand its limitations. He states that, "[m]etaphysic categories are not dogmatic statements of the obvious; they are tentative formulations of the ultimate generalities."[37] Whitehead understands that need for metaphysic categories to better understand our reality, but at the same time, he also understands that these categories must remain flexible. Static universal categories would eventually work against our understanding of our reality and defeat the whole purpose of having them. This is the middle ground of Whitehead. He fights against modern thinkers by allowing for change and flexibility within metaphysic categories, but at the same time, he fights against postmodern thinkers by keeping them.

This leads to what makes Whitehead so pivotal to our discussion – Whitehead's postmodern perspective still allows for theism. This marks a major separation between Whitehead and other postmodernists or the "dominant image" of postmodernism. This is also why other postmodern perspectives can't help us when it comes to the prophetic. The prophetic makes no sense without a relation to God. Even if we come up with a new understanding of how that relation works, it still needs to be there.

[36] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 8.
[37] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 8.

Within Whitehead, the tension still exists, however. Whitehead would agree that there are major flaws in the modern construction of God and that such notions need to be criticized. With the modern notion of God based on premodern ideas of God mixed with mechanistic and sensationalistic views of nature, it adds up to a vision of God that cannot be justified through reason or experience. But while other postmodernists throw out the idea of God altogether, Whitehead choses to stay within the theistic framework and use reason and experience to justify a new conception of God.

This is why we turn to Whitehead for our discussion on the prophetic. By basing his philosophy on reason and experience, Whitehead formulates a new system of thought that coincides with our experience. Olan suggested turning to Whitehead for this very reason. It is not coincidental that Whitehead based his entire metaphysical scheme on relationality and indeterminacy – both are determining factors of our experience. Whitehead is able to take this understanding even further by including a model for God that fits with those determining factors and thus does not violate our experience.

Ultimately, this leads to the necessity of a Process Prophetic. We need to see if we can fit a prophetic into Whitehead's scheme because that scheme fits with our reality. In doing so, we can answer Olan's critique and find a prophetic that is meaningful to American Jews today because it fits with their reality and does not reject it. A fully detailed explanation, however, is necessary to determine how that would work. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the philosophy of Whitehead and see if it can play a role in our reinterpretation of the prophetic. In spelling out Whitehead's metaphysical scheme, we will be able to see how it addresses Olan's requirements.

Process in Whitehead

Whitehead's understanding of process sets the foundation for his philosophy and everything else that comes after would not make sense without it. Since his entire explanation of process goes beyond our discussion, I have focused specifically on the aspects of process that are necessary for what I am attempting to accomplish here, especially Whitehead's understanding of beauty which emerges out of tensions and contrasts.

Whitehead bases his system on the notion of becoming. Everything in creation experiences and is continually becoming, every moment of its existence. This means that every actual thing comes into being only through a process of unifying every element that creates it. The process culminates in the entity unifying itself to become what it is going to be. As Whitehead puts it, "That in the becoming of an actual entity, the *potential* unity of many entities in disjunctive diversity – actual and non-actual – acquires the *real* unity of the one actual entity; so that the actual entity is the real concrescence of many potentials."[38] Thus, each entity takes in everything that comes before it as well as everything it could possibly be. Finally, in one self-creating act, the entity finds a unity to become what it is. What is important here is that, wherever the components that make up our reality come from, something can only "be" through a process of unification governed by the actual thing itself.

When we speak of the actual world, we are referring to actual entities (or moments of experience). All actual entities are presented with every past experience that has come before it. The process of identifying this data is what Whitehead terms "feeling." The feeling of the data is simply recognizing which past actual entities are relevant to that particular new actual entity.

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[38] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22.

Eternal objects are the potentials or possibilities of what an actual entity could be. "An eternal object is always a potentiality for actual entities; but in itself, as conceptually felt, it is neutral as to the fact of its physical ingression in any particular actual entity of the temporal world."[39] Every actual entity has available to it an infinite set of possibilities of what it could become. These possibilities cannot influence any actual entity (unlike the past world) but are there to be selected by the concrescent process. Through the process of becoming, both sets of data (from the actual world and the eternal objects) are felt and incorporated in a very specific way to form that specific actual entity. Both of these processes are very important in understanding how our world maintains itself from the past, to the present and into the future.

Beauty

Whitehead's system all comes down to aesthetics or beauty. Beauty, for Whitehead, is the character of value. All of the components of becoming come together to achieve this character of value. Thus, Whitehead based his system in a particular understanding of value found in experience itself. When it comes to beauty, Whitehead states that "it is the mutual adaptation of the several factors in an occasion of experience. Thus in its primary sense Beauty is a quality which finds its exemplification in actual occasions."[40] To fully understand what he means by this, and what it has to do with value, we turn to John Cobb. Cobb explains that what makes a sunset or painting beautiful is the ability of that sunset or painting to "participate in a certain harmony of proportions and relations."[41] But this harmonizing is not only achieved by

[39] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 44.
[40] Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1933), 252.
[41] John Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*, 2nd ed. (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 57.

the painting or sunset itself; the experience of them must also harmonize proportions and relations. Because of this, our experience of the painting can be understood as beautiful in the same way as the painting. Our experience of the painting also has its own complexity that must be held together in some harmonious fashion. Thus, this harmonizing of the complexity is what makes the experience valuable. Whitehead generalizes this understanding to all of experience. All experience must have some measure of complexity and harmony.[42] With this being the case, then all experience has some level of beauty or value.

In Whitehead's system, however, there are different levels of value. More complex harmonies, thus more complex beauty, can be understood as more valuable. In an attempt to explain Whitehead's perspective, Cobb offers a specific analogy.[43] If we are looking at a wall painted a pretty color, we can argue that such a wall has aesthetic value. The wall is harmonious (thus valuable) to be sure. But if we compare that wall to an actual painting, it could be argued that the painting is "more beautiful." This argument is based on the fact that the painting was able to integrate more colors and thus maintain a higher complexity. But complexity is not actually enough to argue why one is more beautiful than the other. Just putting more random colors on a canvas may not work; a certain level of harmony is needed in how the colors work together. The paining must harmonize much more complex elements, which means the level of value (or beauty) goes up due to its complexity. A similar example can be made using music. One note by itself may be appealing, but when you play a harmonious cord, the aesthetic value goes up. Not only is the cord more complex due to having more notes in it, but those notes

[42] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 252.
[43] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 58.

resonate harmoniously with each other producing something "more appealing." Judging aesthetic value has to do with increasing complexity held together in some form of harmony.

Making comparisons of value experience can be judged through what Whitehead calls the "strength" of beauty for that particular experience. "Strength has two factors, namely, variety of detail with effective contrast, which is Massiveness, and Intensity Proper which is comparative magnitude without reference to qualitative variety."[44] From this we get that the strength of beauty has to do with complexity of the elements brought together, as well as the intensity in which those elements are felt. Thus, a "stronger" experience in terms of beauty is one that has more intensity through complexity which is held together harmoniously. This understanding of beauty greatly complicates things. As Cobb explains, "An experience of great strength is certainly preferable to a trivial one even if it is considerably less harmonious." But, on the other hand "a slight gain of strength may not counterbalance a loss of harmony."[45] This complication just adds another level of complexity to Whitehead's notion of beauty. No single factor discussed determines the strength of beauty, and thus, there is no single scale to evaluate it. All of it must be considered together.

If stronger beauty is judged by more complexity, intensity, and harmony, then the achievement of it can understood the same way. In his chapter on Beauty in *Adventure of Ideas*, Whitehead lays out a chain of concepts that eventually come to define beauty. He states that "Beauty is defined as the perfection of Harmony; and the perfection of Harmony is defined in terms of the perfection of the Subjective Form in detail and in final synthesis. Also, the perfection of Subjective Form is defined in terms of 'Strength'."[46] As we have seen, strength of

[44] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 253.
[45] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 58.
[46] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 252.

beauty has everything to do with complexity and intensity. Going even further, complexity and intensity emerge out of contrasts and the tensions that exist between them.

Progression in Whitehead's system has everything to do with higher forms (or stronger forms) of beauty. This can be seen in what Whitehead called higher levels of experience. Higher levels of experience allow for higher intensities within those experiences, which means they also allow for stronger beauty. "The heightening of intensity arises from order such that the multiplicity of components in the nexus can enter explicit feeling as *contrasts*, and are not dismissed into negative prehensions as *incompatibilities*."[47] Intensity of experience arises out of the ability to hold contrasts together without discarding them. Most importantly, however, this process of unification comes from a balance (or play of tensions) between the contrasts from which order emerges. Thus, by exploring how this play of tensions between contrasts works in Whitehead, we can understand how beauty is achieved at every level of his process-relational system.

Progress Through Contrasts

At the most basic level of our reality, a tension exists between what Whitehead calls positive and negative "prehensions." Intensity of experience can be understood as the ability to bring together greater contrasts of experience. "Through organization and ordering of eternal objects it is possible to have a greater variety of them together in one actual entity. The greater variety and number of them integrated into one occasion the greater the intensity of the

[47] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 83.

occasion."[48] To understand this we must explore all the elements that make up an occasion of experience. Each occasion of experience must be able to integrate a wide variety of elements or data. These elements include data from the past as well as eternal objects or eternal possibilities that are relevant to that occasion. As the information is presented to the occasion, it must determine what to do with it.

Each occasion has the ability to feel or prehend the data coming in (through the physical pole). These prehensions can be positive or negative. A positive prehension means that the occasion can feel some aspects of the data coming in and is able to incorporate that feeling into its final formulation. A negative prehension refers to all the data that is discarded (not incorporated) because the prehensions (or feelings) of that data are incompatible to that occasion.[49] An occasion is more "complex" when it is able to positively prehend and incorporate more data, "to be able to appropriate data means to be able to bring it together into effective contrast."[50] This idea of contrast is at the core of understanding intensity of experiences, "the less complex occasion will negatively prehend feelings which a more complex occasion could have integrated into a more complex and thereby more intense harmony."[51] If an occasion is more complex it has the ability to hold together higher amounts of contrast. A less complex occasion will simply see the variety of contrasts as incompatibilities and will discard them by means of negatively prehending them. This is so important because a higher level of harmony can lead to a higher level of intensity, "hence, the growth of complexity…means a growth of intensity of experience."[52] This growth of intensity is what constitutes a higher level of

[48] Edmund J. Thompson, "An Analysis of the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead and William Ernest Hocking Concerning Good and Evil" (Ph.D diss., University of Chicago, 1933), 48.
[49] David R. Griffin, *God, Power, Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 283.
[50] Griffin, *God, Power, Evil*, 283.
[51] Griffin, *God, Power, Evil*, 283.
[52] Griffin, *God, Power, Evil*, 283.

experience. At this level, intensity of experience is based on the ability to hold contrasts together. This contrast (between positive and negative prehensions) creates a tension that allows for a progression of experience. Thus, even at the most basic level of existence, there is value or beauty in experience created through tensions and contrasts.

This now brings us the next level of experience. This is the level of "societies," which brings out the tension between "order" and "disorder." Because of their ability for intensity, more complex occasions are needed to achieve higher levels of experience. But these more complex occasions need a system in which they can operate, meaning that these occasions need a foundation so that they can maintain their complexity. This foundation or sustaining system can only be attained through a proper ordering of societies. Order allows for the creation of societies of actual occasion that can sustain more complex occasion of experience.

> [T]he term 'order' evidently applies to the relations among themselves enjoyed by many actual entities which thereby form a society. The term 'society' will always be restricted to mean and nexus of actual entities which are 'ordered' among themselves…The point of a 'society', as the term is used here, is that it is self-sustaining; in other words, this is its own reason.[53]

It is this ordering of actual entities (or actual occasions) into societies that allows for more complexity to exist. "A 'structured society' may be more or less 'complex' in respect to that multiplicity of its associated sub-societies and sub-nexus and to the intricacy of their structural pattern."[54] For complexity and therefore intensity to exist, there needs to be a vast support system. This support system is based in actual entities forming many different levels of

[53] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 89.
[54] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 100.

societies. These different levels of societies come together and form a structure by which more complex societies can emerge. "A structured society which is highly complex can be correspondingly favourable to intensity of satisfaction for certain sets of its component members. This intensity arises by reason of the ordered complexity of the contrasts which the society stages for components."[55] It is the emergence of these more complex societies that make possible the higher levels of intensity needed for higher levels of experience.

Now that we have an idea of the importance for order in progression of higher levels of experience, the effects of its contrast (disorder) can be seen. If order is the sustaining of a system that can support more complex occasions, then disorder is the breaking down of that supporting system. "The intensity of satisfaction is promoted by 'order' in the phases from which concrescence arises and through which it passes; it is enfeebled by the 'disorder.'"[56] This enfeeblement comes out of the effect of disorder, which is the breaking down of the supporting system that allows for more complexity, which in turn reduces the ability for higher levels of intensity. Whitehead calls this phenomenon "chaotic disorder." "Chaotic disorder means lack of dominant definition of compatible contrasts in the satisfaction attained, and consequent enfeeblement of intensity. It means the lapse towards slighter actuality."[57] The movement toward chaos, then, is the movement away from the ability to sustain higher levels of actuality (or experience) and toward the ability to sustain lower levels of actuality.

What I have suggested above is that order is a necessity for higher levels of experience. This does not mean, however, that order in and of itself is necessarily good. Whitehead states that "there are different types of order; and it is not true that in proportion to orderliness there is

[55] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 100.
[56] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 84.
[57] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 92-93.

depth."[58] Whitehead goes on to say that "there are various types of order and some of them provide more trivial satisfaction than do others."[59] The move toward order can be seen as good in that it provides an atmosphere where higher levels of experience can be maintained. But there are many different types of order, some of which can only sustain minute (or trivial) levels of experience. If these types of order remained dominant, then experiences in the world would remain at lower levels.

To achieve progress toward higher levels of experience, something has to happen to push progress forward. Something has to happen to go beyond the types of order that can only sustain trivial amounts of experience. What has to happen is that something new or novel has to be introduced into the prevailing order. The novelty introduced into the system creates a disruption that must be dealt with. In dealing with novel elements, the order and harmony of the system become disrupted and a form of disorder emerges. The system is now forced to find a new harmony and new order that must take into account the novel element. It is in the finding of the new harmony and new order that progress of experience is made, and it is through the disruption of harmonious order that progress is maintained. Whitehead states that, "if there is to be progress beyond limited ideals, the course of history by way of escape must venture along the borders of chaos in its substitution of higher for lower types of order."[60] This is where eternal objects come in. A novel element emerges from the possibilities (eternal objects) that are presented to the society according to the context of that society. This novel element enters the system and disrupts it and causes a movement from order to disorder. A chaotic element

[58] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 110.
[59] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 110.
[60] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 111.

emerges in the disordered system. A movement from order to chaos also implies a movement from the intensity established by the previous order to more trivial states.

If the disruptive element was extreme, it would mean that the destruction of the society would remain dominant. Within each occasion, the risk of this final destructive end is a possibility each time a new element is introduced into a harmonious order. But if this disruptive element was successfully incorporated into the ordered society, such that a new order could be maintained, it would mean the growth of that society into an increasingly complex ordered society. It would be more complex because it would be able to keep the contrast presented by the disruptive element without discarding it. With disruptive elements being introduced into different systems of order, they now have the potential to evolve into more complex societies, which in turn creates the potential for higher levels of experience. Whitehead states that "the right chaos, and the right vagueness are jointly required for any effective harmony."[61] This means that, through the tension between order and disorder, progress toward stronger beauty is made. This also means that this process is absolutely necessary to create something new.

The next level of Whitehead's system is the level of actual feelings. This brings out the tension between harmony and discord. Whitehead describes discord through what he calls "inhibition." Inhibition is "component feelings which mutually inhibit each other so that neither rises to the strength proper to it."[62] As stated earlier, in the formation of an actual occasion, that occasion prehends or feels the data that is presented to it. When two of these feelings conflict with each other, they may inhibit each other, meaning that one or both of these feelings may not reach the strength or intensity that they would have if the conflict had not occurred. When this

[61] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 112.
[62] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 256.

happens, a third feeling becomes present. Whitehead calls this the feeling of "mutual destructiveness." He calls this type of inhibition "aesthetic destruction," and calls the subjective experience of aesthetic destruction "discordant feeling".[63]

Inhibition as discordant feeling is a positive component of the subjective form (or feeling tone) of the occasion. This means it has a direct impact in the overall feeling of the occasion. This is important because discordant feelings are "inconsistent with perfection" within that occasion. The more intense these discordant feelings are the "further the retreat from perfection."[64] When this feeling of discord is introduced into an occasion, it can also be understood as the retreat from perfection, or a destruction of that perfection.

This destruction of perfection has positive as well as negative consequences. As with the movement toward chaos in an ordered system, if the movement toward discord (or destruction) remains dominant, then total destruction may be the eventual result. The risk of this possibility is real any time a disruption occurs. But Whitehead also states that "progress is founded upon the experience of discordant feelings."[65] Like the relation of chaos with order, this element of disruption (as movement away from perfection) is necessary for progress. Whitehead explains this idea through the illustration of what happened to the ancient Greek civilization. The ancient Greeks were "awakened into progress by a great ideal of perfection…its act, its theoretic sciences, its modes of life, its literature, its philosophic schools, its religious rituals, all conspired to express every aspect of this wonderful idea."[66] But Whitehead points out that with the attainment of perfection "inspiration withered," and that "with repetition in successive

[63] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 256.
[64] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 256.
[65] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 257.
[66] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 257.

generations, freshness gradually vanished…Hellenism was replaced by the Hellenistic epoch in which genius was stifled by repetition."[67] This illustration of the ancient Greek civilization points to the core reason why discord is needed for progress in Whitehead's system. The progression toward perfection or harmony is a good thing (as a progression toward higher levels of experience), but once that perfection is obtained it is not necessarily good, because novelty and growth stop. The perfection becomes mere repetition of the past and moves into a static state that becomes stifling. "Even perfection will not bear the tedium of indefinite repetition. To sustain a civilization with the intensity of its first ardour requires more than learning. Adventure is essential, namely, the search for new perfections."[68]

This search for new perfections is why disruption (to some degree) is necessary for progress. Since perfection of harmony becomes repetitious when it is achieved, the only way to promote change is to introduce novelty into the system. Again, this novel element emerges out of the eternal objects that are available according to the context of the situation. Once a discordant feeling is produced by this novel element, a disruption of the perfection is achieved in that particular occasion. Only by this disrupting will the mere repetition be broken, and a progression toward a new perfection of harmony initiated. For Whitehead, progress is to be maintained only by the intermingling of perfection (harmony) and discord. He states that "the new occasion, even apart from its own spontaneous mentality, is thus confronted by basic disharmony in the actual world from which it springs." For Whitehead, "this is fortunate. For otherwise actuality would consist in a cycle of repetition."[69] Higher levels of experience (or the achievement of stronger beauty) cannot be obtained through mere repetition. Therefore, the

[67] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 257.
[68] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 258.
[69] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 259.

element of disruption as discord introduced through the appearance of novelty is necessary to break such repetition and open the possibility for higher levels of experience to emerge. Again, the tension is clear and only through the conflict of harmony and discord is the progression toward higher beauty possible.

What is implicit in this discussion is that life and experience are not permanently fixed or static. Everything in our world changes. These changes can be positive or negative, but the fact remains that existence is an ever-changing reality. Whitehead was very aware of this. He explains that "the art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order."[70] The contrast that lies in that order is essential for sustaining higher levels of experience, but disorder is essential for the progression to those higher levels.

> It seems as though the last delicacies of feeling require some element of novelty to relieve their massive inheritance from bygone system. Order is not sufficient. What is required is something much more complex. It is order entering upon novelty; so that the massiveness of order does not degenerate into mere repetition; and so that the novelty is always reflected upon a background of system.[71]

For Whitehead, order is what makes higher levels of experience possible. But once a certain order has been reached, it will only repeat itself if more novelty does not present itself. It is the disruption (or discord) that keeps the process in constant flux. If order does not change, it cannot grow, and freshness and novelty stop. This reminds us again how much disruption and discord are necessary for the emergent of the new. As necessary elements of Whitehead's system, these processes of constant flux also apply to beauty itself. "Change is required to sustain a maximum

[70] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 339.
[71] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 339.

of beauty."[72] Only through the tensions created by the contrasts of harmony and discord can novelty emerge. Thus, only through these tensions can flux and change emerge to sustain the ongoing progression (or strength) of beauty.

Whitehead also understands that this necessity of disruption and conflict, as well as change and flux, correlates directly to our experience of reality. What we must realize is that our existence parallels the metaphysical. It does not matter how high or low one's experience may be, all things follow the same pattern. The tension inherent in reality applies to us, as well as to the smallest particles of existence. In the presence of disruption or discord, we (meaning society) face the same process as any "society of actual occasions." We are made up of those systems, the only difference is that we are significantly more complex, and we will experience things more intensely because of our increased complexity. This also means that, at our level of higher experience, we have much more potential for the production (and destruction) of beauty. Due to the level in intensity and complexity created by the tensions possible in human civilization, there are great possibilities in maximizing beauty in the world.

As with Whitehead's example of the Greeks, all human societies, through their history, have had to come to some balance (meaning some kind of harmony) in order to sustain themselves. This also means, however, that all human societies risk stagnation and ultimate death. Just with any society of actual occasions, once a certain balance or harmony is achieved, the risk of stagnation occurs with any human society that simply attempts to sustain the status quo. Also, as with any society of actual occasions, only through novelty can the balance (of stagnant order) of human society be disrupted.

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[72] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 59.

Through the proper application of philosophy and action, a novel element can emerge. This element can then create discord and create tension with what already exists. Out of this tension emerges a new situation, which is able to break out of the status quo. The stakes are quite high in this situation. With the increased intensity and complexity of human life and civilization, there is great potential for human societies to create beauty in this world. There is also, however, equally great potential for these societies to destroying it.

Whitehead's philosophy, then, can be used set a path toward social critique. "For Whitehead, a requisite for social progress is the re-evaluation of all learned abstractions. There is no specialization so specialized as to be insulated from critique of the philosophy of organism. This is especially true of sociological investigations."[73] His metaphysic incorporates experience, universals, tensions and negation. It is a metaphysic based on constant tension, flux, and change. Since the strength of beauty requires constant change through contrasts and tension, Whitehead's metaphysic provides a philosophical foundation for social critique and possible improvement.

With basing his system on intensity of experience through contrasts and tensions, there are several outcomes that directly relate to the needs of Olan. First, it meets Olan's requirement for relationality. In Whitehead's metaphysics, everything is relational. All actual occasions (as well as the societies built upon them) are a product of relation. Every actual occasion only becomes what it is through relation. Secondly, with these systems of occasions existing in constant tension between order/disorder and harmony/discord, it also means they are in constant flux. Thus, Whitehead created a system that is constantly changing. This meets Olan's requirement of indeterminacy.

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[73] Duston Moore, "Marcuse and Eternal Objects." *Journal for Process Studies* 37 no. 2 (2008): 58.

The fact that Whitehead's system so adequately meets the needs of Olan is not exactly a coincidence. Olan requires a system of thought that coincides with our experience and does not contradict it. Whitehead based his entire system on experience. Whitehead started his inquiry with the same goal as Olan – finding a system of thought that does not contradict our experience. To meet that goal, Whitehead purposely started with experience in his attempt to create a viable system. In the end, if our experience is one of relation and change, it would make sense that Whitehead's system is one of constant relation and change. This is also what makes Whitehead's perspective so valuable to our project. If we need a prophetic that fits with our experience, it would make sense to base it in a metaphysical system that is based on experience.

God

We can now see that Whitehead's overall system can meet the requirements of Olan. This is not the end of our investigation, however. Olan's need for relation and indeterminacy was focused on one particular area of thought. His main critique of Judaism (and thus any new version of the prophetic) was theological. As we discussed earlier, Olan argued that the traditional theological framework of the prophetic is unacceptable, no matter how appealing the other attributes might be.[74] In the face of this particular problem, Olan believed that Whitehead's model of a relational God could provide a framework that could overcome the limits of the classical theological view. If we are attempting to explore a Process Prophetic, we must investigate Whitehead's model of God to see if it holds up to our particular needs. We need to

[74] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 29.

find out if Whitehead's model of God can create a connection with the divine that is meaningful in our modern secular culture.

In the previous section, we found that all occasions of experience are purposive. They all aim at the attainment of greater value, but what was left out of that discussion is why. Although every occasion of experience has inherent value, as well as the value it offers other occasions, there are different levels of value. Those differences are found in the complexity of each occasion. The greater the complexity of an occasion (or a society of occasions), the more intense the experience. With higher intensity comes more value in the experience. What drives these occasions toward more complexity, intensity, and value? What is the mechanism that drives the purpose toward that particular aim? This drive cannot be explained by creativity on its own or past occasions. Something else must be driving the system to the goal of higher value. Whitehead's perspective on God, and what he called the primordial vision, began with the need for a solution to this particular problem.

The role of God in Whitehead's system can be flushed out by briefly examining how his concept of God evolved throughout his writings. By going through Whitehead's development of the concept of God, we will be able to find key elements at every stage that eventually culminate in a vision of God that can work for a new understanding of the prophetic.

The First Stage

In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead confronts a problem. How do we get determinant things out of indeterminacy? Whitehead acknowledges that this particular problem goes back all the way back to Aristotle's metaphysics and his Prime Mover. Although

Whitehead does not turn to Aristotle as a solution, he does recognize that "an analogous metaphysical problem arises which can be solved only in an analogous fashion."[75] Basically, Whitehead's notion of actual occasions did not have inherent in its metaphysical structure what it would take to create itself in the first place. Both actual occasions and what would be eternal objects were creatively neutral. They did not have what it would take to explain how they became actual (or determinate). If actual occasions were indeed centers aiming at value, what determined the values they were aiming at?

Like Aristotle, Whitehead posits that an additional metaphysical principle is required. He begins his description of this principle as a "graded envisagement." Taking an actual occasion (something determinate or a concrete fact) and combining that with an eternal object (something indeterminate or pure possibility) is not possible unless there is a way to categorize which possibilities will be actualized. There is nothing contained in either an actual occasion or an eternal object that can metaphysically explain how that can happen. Thus, as Whitehead states, a "realized extension of eternal relatedness beyond the mutual relatedness of the actual occasions, which prehends into each occasion the full sweep of eternal relatedness," and that this realization is the "graded envisagement which each occasion prehends into its synthesis."[76] This "graded envisagement" is that principle which categorizes or limits what is possible for that particular occasion.

As a consequence, this envisagement also offers some kind of limitation and ordering of values. As Whitehead explains, "restriction is the price of value," and there "cannot be value without antecedent standards of value, to discriminate the acceptance or rejection of what is

[75] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science in the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1925), 174.
[76] Whitehead, *Science in the Modern World*, 176.

before the envisagement mode of activity."[77] Whitehead acknowledges that value is an outcome of the process of actuality. But if this value emerges out of possibility becoming actual, and that can only happen with an ordering of possibilities, then the possible values must be ordered or graded as well. If this is the case, then some kind of standard must exist or else there would be no way the values could be ordered. Again, there is nothing contained in an actual occasion or an eternal object that can account for this ordering of value. Thus, as with Aristotle coming to the conclusion of a Prime Move, out of metaphysical necessity, Whitehead concludes that there must be a limiting principle that is external and prior to the process.

Whitehead would eventually call this antecedent ordering the "Principle of Limitation," and he equated this with the Western understanding of God. As a principle of limiting and ordering of values for realization in the actual world, the first elements of God are set down. Whitehead goes on to say that the vision of this God "is the source of error, of truth, of art, of ethics, and of religion. By it, fact is confronted with alternatives."[78]

The Second Stage

In *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead supplements and then begins to alter what he set down in *Science and the Modern World*. In doing so, he adds three more key elements to God, and thus three key elements to the primordial vision. First, Whitehead explains that "the universe exhibits creativity with infinite freedom and a realm of forms with infinite possibilities; but that this creativity and these forms are together impotent to achieve actuality apart from the

[77] Whitehead, *Science in the Modern World*, 178.
[78] Whitehead, *Science in the Modern World*, 176.

completed ideal harmony, which is God"[79] This is basically a restatement of what Whitehead set down in his previous work except for one addition – God as a "completed ideal harmony." By adding this additional element, Whitehead is ensuring that some measure of harmony and order is maintained in the universe, and this is accomplished by ordering eternal objects (as a principle of limitation). What makes this addition significant is that, through this understanding, the ordering of eternal objects is specifically attributed to God. This becomes the second element necessary for the primordial vision because this ordering of eternal objects becomes an envisagement of those eternal objects through a principle of value.

Whitehead then goes on to explains that God is an actual entity (albeit a very special kind of actual entity). Since the "boundless wealth of possibility in the realm of abstract form would leave each creative stage still indeterminate, unable to synthesize under determinate conditions the creatures from which is springs," then the "definite determination which imposes ordered balance on the world requires an actual entity imposing its own unchanging consistency of character on every phase."[80] The consequences of God being an actual entity sets forth the third element of the primordial vision. As a non-temporal actual entity, how God relates to the world changes, thus so does God's envisagement. This new envisagement creates a way in which an actual occasion is conceptually related to ideal possibilities.

Another consequence of making God an actual entity is that the world can influence God as much as God can influence the world. Whitehead argues that God's "purpose is always embodied in the particular ideals relevant to the actual state of the world. Thus, all attainment is immortal in that it fashions the actual ideals which are God in the world as it is now."[81] But

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[79] Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1926), 119.
[80] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 94.
[81] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 159.

Whitehead also states that God "passes into the next relation to the world with enlarged, or diminished, presentation of ideal values"[82] From this we can conclude that God can influence the world through the ordering of ideals, but that ordering can also be influenced by the reality of the world. As a consequence of this mutual relation, the envisagement itself is ongoing. Through the interaction between God and the world, God makes order and value in the world possible. But then the world acts upon the ordering from God, which affects God's next relation to the world.

Thus, by the end of *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead has constructed a God that is much more than just a limiting principle. Yes, God is needed to limit and order eternal objects, but as an actual entity, God is also able to put forth a vision of ideal possibilities for the world. This vision then makes possible a specific order in the world and sets up a mutual relation between God and the world. But questions still remain. What makes the "ideal" in the ideal possibilities? How does God's relation to the world define that? How exactly does God offer it to the world and how can God be influenced by the world? These answers emerge in *Process and Reality*.

The Final Stage

At this point it's becoming clear that Whitehead's understanding of God obviously does not fit the mold of traditional Jewish understanding. The traditional understanding of God puts God above or beyond the principles that govern our actual world. This is not the case in the Whiteheadian system. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead makes it a point to say that God, "is

[82] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 159.

not to be treated as an exemption to all metaphysical principles, invoked to have their collapse. He [God] is their chief exemplification."[83] In Whitehead's system, each aspect of creation affects and is affected by everything around it. Every occasion of experience relates to the environment which it is in, just as the environment relates to that occasion of experience. If the notion of God is not going to be an exception, but rather an exemplification of these principles, it means that God must relate to the world just as the world relates to God. It also means that God is affected by the world just as the world is affected by God.

Thus, for Whitehead, God is not separate from the system. In fact, God is the vital part that holds the system together. Not only does God mirror the same process of unification, the unity of God is necessary to make the system work. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead explains that God has two natures that are continually coming together to make up the divine source in the universe. What Whitehead calls the primordial and consequent natures of God are like two sides to the same coin. On one side we have the "infinite" aspect of God that holds all the possibilities of what everything in creation could be. On the other side we have the "finite" aspect of God that takes in (or experiences) every moment of creation, as it is, in that moment. Both of these natures have a function in how the world relates to God and how God relates to the world. It is through the consequent nature that God is affected by the world, and it's through the primordial nature that the world is affected by God. It is an interweaving of these two natures that creates the whole that is God.

The key to understanding this model of God, however, is to understand how these two natures integrate and unify. "The perfection of God's subjective aim, derived from the

[83] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 343.

completeness of his primordial nature, issues into the character of his consequent nature. In it there is no loss, no obstruction. The world is felt in a union of immediacy."[84] What makes God work is God's ability to hold the contrasts presented by the finite world together with God's infinite being. By integrating and holding both natures together, God forms a one unified vision of existence.

Whitehead describes the consequent nature of God as "conscious, and it is the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom."[85] The consequent nature of God takes in every possible experience of the actual world. Because God must be the exemplification of metaphysical principles, God must also be an actual entity. As an actual entity, God must incorporate incoming data (meaning the world) into its actual formulation. This means that everything that happens in the world is experienced in God. As Whitehead explains, "[t]he completion of God's nature into a fullness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God. He shares with every new creation its world; and the concresent creature is objectified in God as a novel element in God's objectification of that world."[86] Since every actual occasion, every possible experience in the world is taken in and objectified by God, it means that God shares every aspect, every feeling, in our world. It also means that the novelty required for God's unity comes from the world. This ever-present novelty objectified in God is why God is ever changing as the world changes. The incredible value of God's consequent nature is that nothing is lost because it is incorporated into God's unity.

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[84] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.
[85] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.
[86] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.

God's primordial nature is described as the "primary action of God in the world." and as "the principle whereby there is initiated a definite outcome from a situation otherwise riddled with ambiguity."[87] It is through the primordial nature that God is active in the world. Through this activity God urges creation onward as the base of every actual occasion of experience. "He is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feeling at the base of things; so that, by reason of this primordial actuality, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation"[88] It is through God's primordial nature that the infinite possibilities that exist in God (as eternal objects) are ordered. It is though this ordering that God is able to determine what is best for each one of us. It is through God's primordial nature that these best possibilities are offered to each of us through the initial aim.

The Initial Aim

When it comes to the primordial vision, one of the most significant details is the initial aim. It not only explains how God's envisagement can be offered and incorporated into the world, but also offers key elements that finally shape the envisagement of God into God's ultimate vision of the universe.

The necessity and function of the initial aim come from Whitehead's concept of the subjective aim. In explaining the necessity of the subjective aim, Whitehead had to introduce how the subjective aim originates. If the subjective aim has the ability to limit value into what it will eventually actualize, what starts that subjective aim on its specific trajectory? This initiating

[87] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.
[88] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 344.

of the trajectory is what Whitehead calls the initial aim. But what is the initial aim "aiming" at? If the envisagement of God is ordering ideal possibilities, what ideal is being aimed at? The answer is the next key element in the primordial vision. The ideal that the envisagement of God is aiming at is the increasing value in the world. This leads to what Whitehead called a "primordial ordering." It is primordial because it is offered to every "creaturely occasion," and it is key to the primordial vision because it is an ordering that creates a world in which value can be realized.

Due to the necessity of freedom, each actual entity or society of actual entities has to make a decision whether or not to follow the initial aim from God. Each society must contend with its given context, but the initial aim from God has taken into account that context and offered the best solution of how any element, including disruptive ones, might be incorporated and, if necessary, overcome. This best solution is always there for each society, but the final decision to follow it lies within the power of each society.

Because of this, God can only persuade, not coerce, each society through the initial aim. The fact that God can only persuade means that God must be patient. According to Whitehead, "God's role is not the combat of productive force with productive force, of destructive force with destructive force; it lies in the patient operation of the overpowering rationality of his conceptual harmonization."[89] This is the account by which evolution can be understood. God was (and is) there every step of the way, urging forward the process by persuading each level to incorporate every element and form new harmonies and new perfections. Evolution of this kind is a very slow process. Each time a free choice has to be made to move toward such new harmonies. If

[89]Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 346.

the choice is not made, however, God waits patiently, always ready to urge that society to new and higher perfections.

What God Means for Us

When we incorporate the notion of God into our level of reality, we must see that the metaphysical reality is mirrored in our own. The only difference is that we experience God in our own particular way due to our level of experience. Having said this, it must be understood that God works in the same way, at every level of experience. As I stated before, God is not above or beyond our world. It is of vital importance that we realize that "God is not independent of the world, but interdependent with the world."[90] In a relation model, God is not wholly other. God is interacting with everything in our universe all the time.

I have already described God by explaining God's consequent and primordial natures. I have also discussed God's ability to work persuasively with the world through the initial aim. These terms translate into an understanding of God that is very real in all of our lives. First of all, the two natures of God come together to form an image of a God who is omnipresent. Understood in this way, God is present to all aspects of creation all the time. This is an image of God that is "pervasively present to and with all things."[91] By taking in the world, as it is, at every moment of its existence, God is present with the world at every moment of its existence.

If God is present to us at every moment of our existence, then God is in a position to interact with us at each moment. Through the initial aim, God touches all of creation at the

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[90] Marjorie H. Suchocki, *In God's Presence: Theological Reflection on Prayer* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996), 19.

[91] Suchocki, *In God's Presence*, 5.

deepest level of its being. This means that "in every moment of existence God touches the world with guidance toward its communal good in that time and place, and that just as the world receives energy from God it also returns its energy to God."[92] Understanding the power of God as pervasive energy means that God's energy is interacting and intermingling with our own. God touches us with God's energy, and we touch God with ours. This giving and receiving of energy creates a truly dynamic relationship between God and the world. "God gives to the world and receives from the world; the world receives from God and gives to God, ever in interdependent exchange."[93] This means that God is not just acting in the world, but interacting with the world. God is not a mere presence in the world, nor is God an active presence pressing its will on the world. God is an interacting presence that works in the world and with the world.

It is this vision that holds the system together. According to Whitehead, God is able to send this vision back to the world and thus move the system forward. Though the unification of God, God is able to present to the world the best possibilities for its own unification. This means that God is present to all aspects of creation urging each entity to its best unified transformations. "In this way God is completed by the individual, fluent satisfactions of finite fact, and the temporal occasions are completed by their everlasting union with their transformed selves, purged into confirmation with the eternal order which is the final absolute 'wisdom.'"[94] What is so groundbreaking about this model is that God and the world affect each other and create a unified whole. The world is experienced by God, those experiences are unified with God's infinite nature, and then God affects the world by urging the world to its own individual unifications. Each component of the system (meaning God and the world) is necessary for the

[92] Suchocki, *In God's Presence*, 24.
[93] Suchocki, *In God's Presence*, 24.
[94] Suchocki, *In God's Presence*, 24.

other. Thus the system as a whole is a process of unification. As Whitehead puts it, "God is the infinite ground of all mentality, the unity of vision seeking physical multiplicity. The World is the multiplicity of finites, actualities seeking a perfect unity."[95] God and the world need each other and work together. Each one performs its role in perfecting the unity that holds our reality together.

As we discussed earlier, Whitehead's model of God has two natures that are in a constant state of integration. "The perfection of God's subjective aim, derived from the completeness of his primordial nature, issues into the character of his consequent nature."[96] What makes God work is God's ability to hold the contrasts presented by the finite world together within God's infinite being. By integrating and holding both natures together, God forms a never ending, constantly evolving vision of existence. Putting these two natures together creates a model of God that is completely dynamic. It is a model that fits with the ever-changing reality of our own existence.

God's initial aim functions as the basis of novelty and purposefulness in the world. As the limiting principle that orders eternal objects, God makes possible the increase of value in the world. Through the initial aim, God introduces alternatives (novelty) to every occasion, thus urging it to more complexity and higher intensity. Through the consequent and primordial natures, God is able to give to the world the best possibilities of achieving greater complexity (thus greater value and beauty) in the context of their existence.

In looking at the evolution of Whitehead's thought, we can see a specific development of his understanding of God. As a graded envisagement, God orders value for the world. As an

[95] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 348.
[96] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.

ideal harmony, God orders the ideal for achieved value in the world. This means God culminates as the ideal for maximizing beauty and value for everything in the world. God's vision for the world, or what Whitehead calls the primordial vision, becomes the retention and creative transformation of the immediate worldly achievement of value. The primordial vision offers to the world the ideals necessary to allow for and encourage true transformation which, in the end, leads to increasing values of experience.

As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Whitehead made a critical observation when he critiqued the modern perspective of reality. He observed that modern theories on how realty functions sound great, but they no longer make sense in practice. They go too much against our experience. Olan's critique of the classical view of God falls along the same lines. Olan argued that the classical understanding of God is no longer meaningful because it no longer fits with our reality. The classical view of God is based on the view that God is perfect. This perfection, however, comes with serious consequences. God being understood as static, separate, and complete all stems from the label of perfection. The consequence of perfection, then, is that God has become so separate that God simply no longer fits with the world we experience. In a postmodern culture, we don't see reality as separate, static and unrelated. As Olan argues, we see a world filled with relation and change. Thus, like Whitehead's critique of modernity, the classical model of God can be critiqued in the same way. The consequences of God's perfection may sound great in theory, but in practice they no longer function.

As we observed, Whitehead's model for God is quite different from the classical version. This was exactly the point. The classical model for God directly contradicts our experience. As noted earlier, Whitehead believes the opposite should be the case. God must "not to be treated as

an exemption to all metaphysical principles"; instead, God "is their chief exemplification."[97] By showing how God exemplifies our reality, Whitehead's model of God may be able to overcome the consequences of the classical view. In fitting with our experience, Whitehead presents a model of God that is completely relational and fully integrated into every aspect of our reality. In line with this, God is not static and unchanging. In order to be relational and integrated, God must also be able to change. God is affected by us as much as we can be affected by God. Whitehead's model for God, therefore, can be used to answer Olan's criticisms and ultimately fits our needs for a Process Prophetic. By meeting the demands of Olan, Whitehead's model for God can be the necessary foundation for our new interpretation of the prophetic.

The Issue with Using Whitehead

The philosophy of Whitehead, however, does present its own problem. Whitehead offers the prophetic a metaphysic that contains a viable model for God, but that only meets half of our needs for a new interpretation of the prophetic. Olan may be satisfied, but we have not addressed Ellis' ethical conditions. This is a potential problem with Whitehead. Since Whitehead based his philosophical system on aesthetics, ethics was regulated to secondary status. As Charles Hartshorne once observed, ethics must "lean on aesthetics."[98] This comes from the focus on aesthetics as a foundation for judging experience. What makes experience "good" is aesthetic in nature. From this standpoint, any conception of ethics must come from aesthetics.

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[97] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 343.

[98] Charles Hartshorne, "Beyond Enlightened Self-Interest: A Metaphysics of Ethics," *Ethics* Vol. 84, No. 3 (Apr., 1974): 214.

Several Process thinkers have attempted to incorporate different ethical views into Whitehead's philosophy, but all ran into the problem of making ethics a primary concern in a system based on aesthetics.[99] This leads to a serious question for our project. Can a system focused on aesthetics be used to support a system focused on ethics? Or put another way, can any ethic found in Whitehead be strong enough to hold up and meet the needs of an ethical tradition?

A good example of this is the notion of justice. Justice is fundamental to many interpretations of the Jewish prophetic. Justice, however, is almost completely missing from Whitehead's philosophy. As Roland Faber once observed, "It is, indeed, a curious and alarming fact that Whitehead's 'civilization' is not concerned with 'justice' at all," and we are often "left puzzled with this silence."[100] That silence would be deafening from a prophetic point of view. If we want to use Whitehead to address the theistic issues in the prophetic, then the ethical issues in Whitehead must also be addressed. Before we can address these issues, however, we need a point of comparison. We need to know the ethical criteria contained in the prophetic, so we can judge whether or not Whitehead's system can work. There are many different interpretations of the prophetic through Jewish history, however. Although most of them have an ethical tradition that would likely satisfy Ellis, most would not satisfy Olan. The next stage of this project then, is to explore what prophetic tradition would fit best to create a Process Prophetic. That is the subject of the next chapter.

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[99] This list would include John Cobb, David Rey Griffin and Brian Henning.

[100] Roland Faber, "Theopoetic Justice: Towards an Ecology of Living Together," in *Beyond Superlatives: Regenerating Whitehead's Philosophy of Experience*, ed. Roland Faber, J. R. Hustwit and Hollis Phelps (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 171.

Chapter 2 – Which Prophetic?

The purpose of this chapter is to explore why Heschel's version of the prophetic fits best with our project. The Jewish prophetic tradition traces its origins all the back to the prophets themselves. Between then and now, there have been many different versions of the prophetic and the role it plays in Jewish thinking. In our modern context, it comes down to three main individuals – Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Emmanuel Levinas. Marc Ellis once stated that, "If the prophetic Jewish tradition was alive in the twentieth century, these men defined it."[101] This warrants a look at all three, as well as a discussion as to why Heschel is the best fit for Process Prophetic.[102]

Buber

For Martin Buber's understanding of the prophetic, confronting the issues of his time meant taking a more existential route. Like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard (as well as others), Buber recognized the pitfalls of the rationalistic and materialistic worldviews. "All of Buber's writings were efforts to liberate readers from the alienating conditions of life and thought and educate them to alternative forms."[103] But more specifically, "he endeavored to free Jews from outmoded categories and forms of life and to indicate a new direction in Jewish life and thought

[101] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 8.
[102] It is important to note that, though its long history, there are many different perspectives within the Jewish prophetic. Beyond the historical context, we could even consider the geopolitical perspectives of Zionism and secular Judaism. Looking at all of them goes far beyond the scope of this project. Even within the scope of this project, several more thinkers could be addressed. Most notable would be Franz Rosenzweig with his Star of Redemption and Mordecai Kaplan with his understanding of Jewish Reconstructionism. For our purposes, however, we will stay with those thinkers who are best suited to address the critiques of both Olan and Ellis.
[103] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 407.

compatible with existential freedom and individual responsibility."[104] And like the existentialists before him, he sought to find a way around the pitfalls of alienation by examining what authentic existence means for the individual. Buber's great contribution was applying this idea to Judaism itself through mystical frameworks. By exploring Jewish existence in this way, Buber wanted to bypass the Greek worldview and find a better connection to the Jewish tradition.

In order to accomplish this, Buber first recognized the power of myth. Completely lost in the rationalistic point of view, myth contains great power in creating a worldview that connects everyone and everything rather than separates them. "Unlike the nineteenth-century Jewish rationalists, who identified myth with paganism, Buber considered myth to be an authentic, immediate expression of the divine-human encounter." In the end, Buber saw "rational conceptualization as distorting the immediate moment of divine-human encounter, he saw myth as a creative expression of a community's response to its encounter with God."[105] This understanding of "encounter" became a center point of Buber's thinking. Through myth, the Jew would be able to find a more genuine way to encounter the divine. In direct opposition to the Enlightenment perspective, Buber saw the rational conception of the world as getting in the way of the human-divine relationship. One could not achieve an authentic encounter with God through purely rational means. Through myth, Buber believed that this encounter with the divine could be better maintained.

Building on the power of myth, and thus building a better relationship with the divine, Buber turned to the mythological structure of Jewish mysticism. More specifically, he turned to the structure of Lurianic mysticism. "Lurianic myth of the 'breaking of the vessels' provided the

[104] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 407.
[105] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 410.

mythic underpinning for Buber's understanding of life and religious faith."[106] Through the breaking-of-the-vessels myth, Buber was able to find validation in setting up his core principles for authentic religious experience.

For Buber, real religious experience (meaning the experience of the connection with the divine) was found in the real relationships between human beings. It is through us encountering each other in a compassionate way that we begin to get a glimpse of the divine. For this reason, the myth of the breaking of the vessels supports his notions beautifully.

> The separation of the sparks from their divine source and from one another represents alienation on a cosmic scale. Similarly, the separation of one person from another, the unnatural separation of being from that to which they are naturally jointed, also constitute alienation. Thus, when we relate to other beings, human and non-human, in a hallowed manner, we help restore the primordial unity and to reduce the degree of alienation in the world.[107]

When the vessels attempting to contain the divine light shattered, pieces of that divine light were encapsulated in all of us. Thus, according to the myth, the only way to release that light and connect it to its source was through compassion and right action toward each other. By focusing on the relationship between beings, we are able to free the divine sparks that reside in all of us. For Buber then, by relating to each other in a "hallowed manner," we also begin to relate to (and thus connect with) God.

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[106] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 411.
[107] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 413.

With this system, the modern Jew can decide to break free of the rationalistic worldview and find a new, more authentic encounter with everything. This authentic encounter then frees us from the alienation we feel and reconnects Jews to each other as well as their tradition. By doing all of this, Buber injects meaning back into the Jewish religious experience. "Judaism, particularly Hasidism, provides a viable alternative to the modern Western vision of society. In contrast to the prevailing dehumanizing instrumentalist ethos, Hasidism offers a model of direct, need-free, loving relationships between persons."[108] By focusing on a more mystical understanding of Judaism, Buber was able to reconnect Jews to their belief system by finding meaning in every action. Through the Hasidic perspective, everyday Jews can find value in their everyday lives as Jews.

Buber's notion of encounter also extended to his understanding of the prophetic. Buber likens the relation between the prophet and the world to the relation between a teacher and a student. But this relation is true encounter. The teacher-student relationship is stripped away from all of its "conditions." For Buber, "The teacher is the one who touches the unconditioned and transmits that possibility through her being. . . which allow[s] the student to turn away from what is known and toward what is beneath and around the known."[109] With such an encounter, knowledge is not simply passed on, it is experienced. It is an experience that allows for a transformation of the student.

Buber equates the teacher with the prophet. The prophet encounters the world in a similar way. "For Buber, the prophet is one who turns herself and others toward relation and a deep experience of being both free and bound."[110] The prophet is the one who can bring an

[108] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 414.
[109] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 65.
[110] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 65.

authentic encounter to each of us through this type of teaching. In doing so, we can break out of those conditions that separate us and get a glimpse of a truly spiritual connection. Thus, "[i]nstead of solitude, a bond with others and the universe is experienced."[111]

Buber puts forth a powerful model for relation, connection, and spirituality in the context of the prophetic, but problems do remain if we want to meet the requirements of both Ellis and Olan. The first major issue is attempting to use Buber's notion of encounter as a foundation for an ethical tradition. It can be argued (and Buber does) that the authentic encounter Buber describes would bring out ethical behavior. But like most existentialist theories, such authentic experiences fight against any type of standardization. This being the case, any kind of foundational ethic would be difficult to extract and formulize. If we are going to build a Process Prophetic, Buber's focus on relation and connection would be helpful, but his lack of focus on ethics means other forms of the prophetic might be more appropriate.

Levinas

When it comes to focusing on ethics, Emmanuel Levinas is a good alternative. With his interpretation of the Other, Levinas purposely fights for ethics as a first philosophy. In many ways, Levinas' notion of the Jewish prophetic and the Other makes sense from the Jewish perspective. It coincides with the Jewish notion of witness as seen through the covenant between God and the people of Israel. Many interpretations of the covenant understand the Jewish people as witness to God's work in the world. Not only does the Jewish prophetic serve as witness through providing an example of how to act in the world, but it also serves as those who question

[111] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 65.

the workings of humanity in the world. This notion of questioning is at the heart of Levinas' Other. The Other calls into question the ethical responsibility of everyone who is faced by that Other. Like the prophetic, the Other calls into question the workings of humanity in the world.

Essentially, in promoting the idea of the Other, Levinas is fighting the orientation of Western philosophy itself. Western thought, for most of its history, has focused the foundations of knowledge on the self. This orientation became the basis for ontology. Basically, if we attempt to understand the concept of reality through our being, then the self takes center stage in how we understand reality. In the language of Levinas, "Being, which is without the density of existents, is the light in which existents become intelligible. To theory as comprehension of beings the general title ontology is appropriate. Ontology, which reduces the other to the same, promotes freedom – the freedom that is identification of the same, not allowing itself to be alienated by the other."[112] The general conception of the self (as ontology) puts the self as that thing though which we understand reality. Thus, to understand how reality works, the self becomes primary.

In the face of this, Levinas argues that the self is in fact secondary. Our initial understanding of reality does not come from the self but from what stands outside. This works because the self can only be oriented by this "other" and thus conditioned by what is outside the self. For this reason (contrary to prevailing Western thought) the other cannot be reduced to the self and stands in contrast to the self. This contrast is the orientation the self needs to understand reality. To understand the implications of this contrast, Levinas states that "theory understood as a respect for exteriority delineates another structure essential for metaphysics. In its

[112] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2011), 42.

comprehension of being (or ontology) it is concerned with critique. It discovers the dogmatism and naïve arbitrariness of its spontaneity, and calls into question the freedom of the exercise of ontology."[113] The contrast that sets up the orientation of the self comes out of the questioning of the self by the other. This critique becomes the basis for the self.

This calling into question (or critique) of the self by the other is at the heart of Levinas' system. The self can only be understood once it is called in to question by the other; thus the traditional notion of ontology is reversed. "Its critical intention then leads it beyond theory and ontology: critique does not reduce the other to the same as does ontology, but calls into question the exercise of the same. A calling into questions of the same – which cannot occur within the egoist spontaneity of the same – is brought about by the other."[114] For Levinas, the self cannot come first. The contrast between the self and this Other sets up the "critical intention" that calls into question our very being. It is this questioning that orients our being and thus the Other (that which is exterior) becomes our true foundation for understanding reality.

As the heart of the system this questioning by the Other also is the origination of ethics in the system. This means that, for Levinas, ethics must also come first. "We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics."[115] The self (or the I, or being) assumes that it is first and fundamental. It is the Other (through critique of being) that makes the self-aware that its place is in question. Once the self begins to question its relation to everything else, it can now begin to understand how that relation works. This, for Levinas, is the basis of an ethical

[113] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 43.
[114] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 43.
[115] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 43.

perspective. This contrast, which sets up the critique of the self by the Other, is the foundation of morality.

To justify and validate his notion of the Other and what the Other presents to us, Levinas turns to metaphysics. To make it all work, he bases his metaphysics on the primacy of separation. "What is essential to created existence is not the limited character of its being, and the concrete structure of the creature is not deducible from this finitude. What is essential to created existence is its separation with regard to the Infinite. This separation is not simply negation. . . Thought and freedom come to us from separation and from the consideration of the Other."[116] Separation between the self and the Other is absolutely necessary. Without separation there is no way to distinguish one from the other. To show this, Levinas takes the notion of separation to the infinite level. Metaphysically, even the idea of the infinite separates itself from everything else. The infinite must stand completely separate from the finite or else it could not be understood as infinite. By equating the infinite with the Other, the Other becomes that irreducible thing separated from everything else. It puts the Other absolutely outside and on its own. Through this necessary separation can we now begin to understand our relation to the Infinite Other and thus understand our own existence.

With the notion of separation in place, Levinas is now able to complete his project of putting ethics first. With the separation of the Infinite, the role of the Other is solidified. The contrast can be made; the calling into question can happe; the ethical obligation can be created. "Each one, as an 'I', is separate from all the others to whom the moral duty is due. The basic intuition of the majority perhaps consists in perceiving that I am not *the equal* of the Other. This

[116] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 105.

applies in the very strict sense: I see myself *obligated* with respect to the Other; consequently I am infinitely more demanding of myself than of others."[117] The separation of the Infinite Other translates into the separation of the self and the Other. This creates the distance necessary to perceive the inequality that exits between the self and the Other. This then evokes the sense of obligation the self has toward the Other.

In more concrete terms, the Other that causes us to question our very selves is presented to us in the real world by real people in a real way. The only questions are who and how? Levinas hints at an answer when he states that "[t]he absolutely other is the Other. . . Neither possession nor the unity of number nor the unity of concepts link me to the Stranger, the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself." But he goes on to add that the "Stranger also means the free one. Over him I have no power. He escapes my grasp by an essential dimension, even if I have him at my disposal. He is not wholly in my site."[118] The "Stranger" is the Other. The Other can be called the Stranger because it is that which stands outside and separate from me. This means that it is strange to me. As I stated before, our being (or self) assumes itself primary (as being at home with oneself). The Other acts as a Stranger who, in the end, disrupts our at-homeness. This disruption is the realization that this separate entity cannot be incorporated into me and thus stands in contrast to me. Thus, as Other, this Stranger forces me to question myself.

But who is this Stranger? Why does this Stranger provoke me to question myself and why do I have no power over him? It must be understood that Levinas has inverted the accepted order of how we understand the world. Others are primary and you (as the self) are secondary.

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[117] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 21.

[118] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 39.

This means that you are defined by how you respond to others as Strangers. It is the relation between you and the Stranger that sets up contrast and thus the question. Levinas continues this inversion when he applies this idea to society. The people who have everything are not in the position to ask ethical questions (i.e. to judge). Only those who have nothing can obtain the proper perspective to judge people in that society. The disenfranchised and oppressed gain their perspective to judge because they are the ones who experience the results of the inequalities of that society.

Levinas explains that, "For the presence before a face, my orientation towards the Other, can lose the avidity proper to the gaze only by turning into generosity, incapable of approaching the other with empty hands."[119] The inversion here is complete. The people who have everything we would call the top. Being on top means that they look down upon the people on the bottom. But when they do this, they stare into the face of the Other. They stare at the very thing that calls themselves into question. In questioning themselves, they are forced to question the inequality that separates them. "The disproportion between the Other and the self is precisely moral consciousness. Moral consciousness is not an experience of values, but an access to external being: external being is, *par excellence*, the Other."[120] This "disproportion" is exactly what provokes the question. It is that noticeable distance in equality that forces the self into the questions of ethics. Thus, by being the Other, the people on the bottom provoke ethics and morality in the people on the top. So, ethically, the bottom Others are highest and the people on top are lowest. For Levinas, this becomes the basis for all morality.

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[119] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 50.
[120] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 293

By making ethics the foundation of his philosophy, the prophetic according to Levinas would certainly fill the requirement of pursuing a Jewish ethical tradition. With his extreme focus on separation, however, the notion of relational connectivity becomes highly problematic. Olan's requirement of relationality and indeterminacy does not fit very well with Levinas and his demand for separateness in the face of the Other. For Levinas, ethical response and obligation are only possible if the Other (as the objects of our concern) is separate from us. This is completely antithetical in an ethical system based on relationality. This lack of relationality also has consequences. As Ellis once observed, for Levinas, the prophet "disturbs all of the religious and secular credos and refocuses our attention of the face of the Other." But "in Levinas, we rarely have a sense that the people are listening or being called. The prophet is so alone that the people of Israel, the prophet's audience, are either assumed or relegated to the background."[121] The concept of the Other by Levinas does create a powerful ethical vision, but its extreme separateness leaves little room for relation. Removing that relation translates to a lack of connection. So much so that, even if the Other is calling us to be ethical, it's so separate that no one is listening.

Heschel

This brings us to Abraham Joshua Heschel. Heschel's understanding of the prophetic provides elements that are missing from Buber and Levinas. His particular version of the prophetic does put forth a powerful vision that directly addresses the ethical components of the tradition. But, at the same time, Heschel is also able to incorporate different elements of

[121] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 232.

relationality. Put together, these elements illustrate why we need to turn to Heschel's prophetic for our reinterpretation. What set Heschel apart from other Jewish thinkers of his day was how he was able to mix traditional aspects of Jewish understanding with modern sensibilities. By doing so, Heschel was able to incorporate relationality into both the ethical and theological components of prophetic understanding. Relationality refers to the way two things are connected or the fact that two things can in some way affect each other. When it comes to traditional Jewish theology, this idea has rather large implications.

Heschel's Need for Relationality

First, it helps explain the relationship between the covenant, God, and the prophetic in Judaism. Since they are all related, if one is altered, the other two will be affected. Secondly, especially for Heschel, it redefines the relationship between God and the people of Israel. To fully understand Heschel's need for relationality, it is helpful to understand his critique of the modern materialist perspective. He argued that it could lead to a sense of alienation and cause destruction to religious belief systems. Heschel understood that "[i]n the modern age, the category of 'thing' prevails. In religious life, God is reduced to a thing that can be manipulated and cajoled."[122] Heschel recognized that, although the enlightenment rationalist perspective was able to progress humanity technologically, it utterly stifled humanity spiritually. Furthermore, Heschel argued that "the distorted conception of religion that prevails in modern society is also evident in Jewish life."[123] A worldview that sees value only in "things" to be manipulated is blind to the possibility of value in anything else. Seeing no value in religion is a direct

[122] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 419.
[123] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 423.

consequence of this particular world view. For Heschel, once this worldview crept into the religious life of Judaism, it began to drain all meaning from it.

To confront this reality, Heschel wanted to embrace the rabbinic tradition, not push it away. Because of this, Heschel went to great lengths to find a spirituality based in relationality. In doing so, he attempts to show that relationality is deeply rooted in the rabbinic tradition. Heschel "insisted that Judaism demands specific patterns of behavior. Translating ideas into deeds and metaphysical insights into patterns of action." This then led Heschel to conclude that "Judaism imbues all dimensions of life with holiness."[124] From this point of view, Heschel sought to inject spirituality back into rabbinic Judaism. By exploring a closer relation to the divine, he was able to find meaning in everyday Jewish life. This means returning to the rabbinic life, not because you have to, but because you want to. It becomes the vehicle for deeper meaning and connection. At the heart of this new vision was his relational understanding of the covenant.

In order to find a meaningful foundation for his ideas of the covenant and the relation to God, Heschel turned to the Jewish mystics. "While medieval philosophers sought to remove from God any vestige of need, Heschel, in the tradition of Kabbalah, believed that God was in need of the human being. We satisfy this divine need when we carry out *mizwot*."[125] If we understand that God needs us as much as we need God, then we can accept that we are in a deep relationship with God. With Heschel's understanding of the covenant as a deep relation to God, staying true to the *mizwot* becomes central to this relation.

[124] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 426.
[125] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 427.

This is not just a call to return to rabbinic tradition. It is a return, in a meaningful way, that creates a deeper connection to the tradition. In the end, "the force and power of Judaism derive from its capacity to shape both the thought and actions of the individual."[126] This focusing on both thoughts and actions creates a deeper connection by involving all aspects of Jewish life, both practical as well as philosophical. "As a polar system encompassing both halakhah and aggadah, rabbinic Judaism provides the modern Jew a framework of thinking and living which is a distinct alternative to the dehumanizing frameworks of modern society."[127] Through this understanding of the covenant as an authentic, caring, and reciprocal relationship with God, Heschel is able show the value of the Jewish tradition and reconnect Jews to their tradition.

Heschel's Relational Covenant

To accomplish this, Heschel re-envisioned the idea of the covenant in Judaism. He believed the idea of the covenant went far beyond the notion of contracts. He stated quite boldly, "Before the Torah, the covenant was."[128] By saying this, Heschel is not replacing the law or Torah, but he understands that the covenant came first and thus exists separate from the law. This brought Heschel to what he considers the core of the covenant, the relationship between God and humanity. He reminds us that "[i]n contrast to our civilization, the Hebrews lived in a world of the covenant rather than in a world of contracts. The idea of contract was unknown to them."[129] Thus, our relationship with God came first. He went on to state that "it is not law and

[126] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 429.
[127] Silberstein, "Renewal of Jewish Spirituality," 429.
[128] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 230.
[129] Heschel, *Prophets*, 230.

order itself, but the living God who created the universe and established its law and order."[130] For Heschel, the law is not to be discarded, but an emphasis on law is not enough. We must also emphasize our relation to the One who established the law and that emphasis must come first.

This redefines what the covenant truly is, or perhaps Heschel would say this brings us back to what the covenant is supposed to be. The prophets remind us that "what obtains between God and Israel must be understood, not as legal, but as a personal relationship, as participation, involvement, tension. God's life participates with the life of the people."[131] The covenant between God and the people of Israel *is* the relationship between God and God's people. This particular relationship is born out of the history of the Jewish people and is based on both God and the Jewish people participating in that relationship. As Heschel puts it, "To live in the covenant is to partake of the fellowship of God and His people."[132]

To understand the covenant, then, is to understand that relationship. Mainly, the relationship set by the covenant is not one-sided. To "partake of the fellowship" means that all participants in that fellowship affect each other. "The covenant is an extraordinary act, establishing a reciprocal relation between God and man."[133] In the traditional understanding of the relations between God and man, it is understood that God can affect humanity, but humans cannot affect God. Heschel's notion of covenant denies this possibility. God must be affected by humans, otherwise God would be unattached and unconcerned, and that is "alien to the Hebrew mind."[134] The fact that God is concerned and cares for his creation is fundamental to the Jewish people. This must mean that what humanity does can and should affect God, or else why would

[130] Heschel, *Prophets*, 230.
[131] Heschel, *Prophets*, 230.
[132] Heschel, *Prophets*, 230.
[133] Heschel, *Prophets*, 230.
[134] Heschel, *Prophets*, 227.

God care? That is why the covenant must denote a reciprocal relationship. It "implies a constant concern and involvement; it is conceived as an emotional engagement."[135] It is this engagement that is the focal point of the covenant and can also define the essence of Judaism through history. In this way, Heschel has infused relationality into the most basic foundations of Judaism. From there, he went on to integrate relationality into all aspects of Judaism and the prophetic.

More importantly, the covenant, God, and prophetic are relational in themselves. "The central meaning of the prophetic faith is. . . based upon the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai."[136] In Jewish understanding, the prophetic makes no sense without the covenant and the covenant makes no sense without God. Each one affects each other and cannot exist without the other. Thus, if a new interpretation changes one of them, the others must change as well. In the case of Heschel, if he wants to promote a vision of relationality within Jewish understanding, he must show how that relationality works in all three.

Heschel's Relational God

Heschel's understanding of the covenant sets up the "theistic dimension" of his thinking. In attempting to explain how God relates to humanity, Heschel focuses considerable attention on re-envisioning how God works in the world. In doing so, Heschel puts forward the idea of the "pathos" of God. In referring to God's pathos, Heschel is referring to the connection God has with humanity. Heschel "believed that the divine pathos represented a unity binding together the eternal and temporal, the rational and irrational, the metaphysical and the historical," and that

[135] Heschel, *Prophets*, 230.
[136] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 28.

"this unity provided the foundational relation between God and humanity, the correlation of Creator and created, and the dialogue between God and the people of Israel."[137] The definition of pathos is the evoking of emotion, namely, pity or compassion.[138] However, Heschel is not referring to *our* pity or compassion, but rather the compassion of God. He is attempting to illustrate a God that feels and a God that is capable of an emotional connection. Thus, to call God "the God of pathos," Heschel is setting up a relational understanding of God. He is establishing God as one who is deeply connected with humanity and cares about human activity. For Heschel, "Pathos denotes, not an idea of goodness, but a living care; not an immutable example, but an ongoing challenge, a dynamic relation between God and man."[139] This removes any notion that God is a passive observer, but rather is an interactive God. Heschel is clear on this and goes on to state that God's pathos is not "passive affection," or "mere contemplative survey of the world."[140] The God of pathos does not just care for humanity, but is deeply involved in conveying that care to humanity.

Through this perspective, God is revealed through a personal and infinite relation to the world. In understanding that a relation can never be one-sided, Heschel allows for God to be affected by the world, especially by human action. For Heschel, the divine pathos "is a reaction to human history, an attitude called forth by man's conduct," which means that it is in our power "to evoke either the pathos of love or the pathos of anger."[141] In the end, the rigidity of the old

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[137] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 117.
[138] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v., accessed December 9, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pathos.
[139] Heschel, *Prophets*, 224.
[140] Heschel, *Prophets*, 224.
[141] Heschel, *Prophets*, 225.

conception of the covenant "is replaced by a dynamic multiplicity of forms of relationship implied in pathos."[142]

For Heschel, his vision of prophetic action and the God of pathos only make sense in relation to each other. Heschel states that "the characteristic of the prophet is not foreknowledge of the future, but insight into the present pathos of God." This means that the "the chief characteristic of prophetic thought is the primacy of God's involvement in history."[143] Therefore, the prophets do not speak in the name of strict moral law; "it is more accurate to see them as proclaimers of God's pathos."[144] Every aspect of the "ethical dimension" put forth by the prophets has only one purpose – to communicate and implement God's concern for all of humanity. As Heschel goes on to say, "prophecy is God meeting man."[145]

Heschel's Prophetic Vision

In describing the prophets, Heschel called them “some of the most disturbing people who have ever lived."[146] In reading the stories of the prophets in the Hebrew bible, this description seems rather accurate. The kind of force they exerted in trying to accomplish their goals was quite amazing. In fact, the way in which the prophets called social structures into question is why Heschel labeled the prophets as "disturbing." "The prophet was an individual who said No to his society, condemning its habits and assumptions, its complacency, waywardness, and syncretism.”[147] The core function of the prophets was not about telling the future, it was about

[142] Heschel, *Prophets*, 230.
[143] Heschel, *Prophets*, 231.
[144] Heschel, *Prophets*, 279.
[145] Heschel, *Prophets*, 227.
[146] Heschel, *Prophets*, xxi.
[147] Heschel, *Prophets*, xix.

challenging the present. They used a possible future to motivate change in the present. From this perspective, the prophets felt compelled to question society. Thus, the prophetic tradition can be characterized by a drive for constant change and improvement. In doing this, they forcefully challenged the standards and norms of their day. Their primary fight was against, not just injustice, but the structures that promoted and upheld injustice.

The prophets were also never cryptic about what their intentions were. "Instead of dealing with timeless issues of being and becoming, of matter and form, of definitions and demonstrations," the prophet is "thrown into orations about widows and orphans, about corruption of judges and affairs of the marketplace. Instead of showing us the way through the elegant mansions of the mind, the prophet takes us to the slums."[148] They were concerned with the harsh realities of their time. "Indeed, the major activity of the prophets was *interference*, remonstrating about wrongs inflicted on other people, meddling in affairs which were seemingly neither their concern nor their responsibility."[149] In an attempt to change the structures of their world, the prophets had to confront and break down those structures so they could be reinterpreted through the lens of justice.

Although Heschel never used the term "ethical dimension" to describe aspects of the prophetic tradition, it is clear through his writings that the prophets fulfilled an ethical role. The "ethical dimension" for Heschel defined the motivations and actions of the prophets. Within Heschel's writings there are three major ethical areas that can be identified: moral action, justice, and ethical obligation. All three are related to each other and form the backbone of the ethical perspective of the prophet. They create a relational conception of the prophetic that is engaged

[148] Heschel, *Prophets*, 3.
[149] Heschel, *Prophets*, 205.

and deeply concerned with humanity. The culmination of these three aspects throws the prophet into human history to challenge the social structures of their time.

The prophets' desire was to interfere and confront, head on, the structures that created the unjust realities in which they lived. This confrontation is defined by the prophets understanding of moral action, justice, and obligation. Heschel went on to explain that "prophecy is not simply the application of timeless standards to particular human situations, but rather an interpretation of a particular moment in history."[150] Moral action, justice, and obligation were the lenses through which that interpretation was viewed. The true goal of the prophets was one of correction. They witnessed injustice in their time and sought to correct it. In doing this, the prophets focused their energies on the places where correction was most necessary, namely the structures that created the injustice in the first place.

Heschel argued that moral action is seated in a relationship that exists between the prophet and the rest of humanity. To argue this, he started by pointing out how the prophets felt about sacrifice as a means of relating to God. To the prophets, all of the necessary reasons that justified sacrifice "are declared second rate." Some prophets even declared that sacrifice was of "minor importance, if not hateful to God."[151] Although the prophets did not condemn the practice of sacrifice itself, they were pushing for a shift in thinking. Sacrificing to God was no longer good enough because no amount of sacrifice could undo the damage caused by injustice. For this reason, the prophets wanted to put moral action at the forefront of what pleases God. For them, "deeds of kindness, worrying about the material needs of widows and orphans, commonplace things, platitudinous affairs, are exactly what the Lord of heaven and earth

[150] Heschel, *Prophets,* xvii.
[151] Heschel, *Prophets,* 197.

demands!"[152] Heschel believed this marked a turning point in the evolution of Judaism. Through the understanding of the prophets, human ethical action was now the main concern for God and became the intersection of how Jews and God relate to each other.

Heschel stated that "the moral aspect sets the prophetic act apart."[153] To fully comprehend the gravity of this statement, we have to understand what Heschel means by "moral." Heschel explains that the mark of a moral act is "the intense regard and concern for fellow man."[154] It is this intensity toward "his fellow man" that makes moral action relational. In using a contrasting example, Heschel talks about the "religious man." As a religious person, one is focused mainly on prayer and sacrifice to achieve sanctity and salvation. The issue here is that this particular focus is purely individualistic. All the prayer and sacrifice are for sanctity and salvation for oneself. There may be a relation to God, but there is minimal relation to any other person. This brings Heschel to the conclusion that "religious experience is, in most cases, a private affair," in which "contact between God and man comes about, it is believed, for the benefit of the particular man."[155] Heschel believes this individualistic benefit is not of moral concern because it has little to nothing to do with other people. Morality, as a governing principle to behavior, has everything to do with how people act toward other people, not for the benefit of themselves. Thus, until we look at how people treat each other, we are outside the scope of morality. Therefore, the prophetic "must be viewed as an eminently moral act."[156] In having an "intense regard" for other people, the prophet is not concerned with their own benefit. Prophetic inspiration "is not a private affair," and is "for the sake, for benefit, of a third party."[157]

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[152] Heschel, *Prophets*, 197.
[153] Heschel, *Prophets*, 257.
[154] Heschel, *Prophets*, 201.
[155] Heschel, *Prophets*, 202.
[156] Heschel, *Prophets*, 202.
[157] Heschel, *Prophets*, 202.

The prophet is concerned with connecting people to each other, as much as connecting people to God. This is simply two parts of the same activity.

Heschel's understanding of moral action for the prophet lead directly to his understanding of justice. In the realm of moral understanding and action, the prophets stand apart. Heschel argues that "moralists of all ages have been eloquent in singing the praises of virtue," but this is not the case for the prophet.[158] He goes on to explain that "the distinction of the prophets was in their remorseless unveiling of injustice and oppression, in their comprehension of social, political, and religious evils." The prophets "were not concerned with the definition, but with the predicament, of justice," which includes the calling out of injustice.[159] This is what is missing from the "moralists" who are "singing the praises of virtue." Justice for the prophet does not refer to "a mere norm" of strict standards or some sort of static condition. Instead, justice is "a fighting challenge," and a "restless drive."[160] Justice is found in the ongoing fight against those standards and conditions that perpetuate the harm and oppression of others. For Heschel, "Justice is properly described as 'the active process of remedying or preventing what should arouse the sense of injustice'"[161] Thus, for the prophet, justice can only be found in confronting the evils of their day. In this way, justice is a mode of action that exemplifies the relation of the moral act described above.

The relation found in a moral act also leads Heschel to his understanding of justice as a "transcendent demand."[162] The very fact of its relationality is what makes it transcendent. A relation implies more than just the individual and puts the demand for justice beyond the

[158] Heschel, *Prophets*, 204.
[159] Heschel, *Prophets*, 204.
[160] Heschel, *Prophets*, 212.
[161] Heschel, *Prophets*, 204.
[162] Heschel, *Prophets*, 198.

individual, all of which leads to Heschel's notion of ethical obligation. Heschel argues that our responsibility toward justice in regard to the "transcendental demand" emerges out of an "interpersonal relationship that implies both claim and responsibility."[163] Justice itself necessarily implies a claim (or demand) that we, as a society, are responsible to meet.

This idea emerges out of Heschel's distinction between a person that "desires" something versus someone who "deserves" something.[164] The key difference that separates the two is centered around who is responsible for its fulfillment. If someone desires something, it falls on that individual to fulfill that desire. If, however, someone deserves something, then that person is entitled to what they deserve; thus, it falls on others to fulfill that entitlement. In a deserving situation, a claim is made that others are responsible to fulfill. This brings Heschel to conclude that "[t]he claim of one person to attain justice is contingent upon the assumption that there is another person who has the responsibility to answer it."[165] Justice is not a desire. It is not for an individual to fulfill for themselves. Justice is a claim. It is a situation where fulfillment can only be attained through the actions of another person. This is why Heschel calls justice an "interpersonal relationship." This is where the notion of obligation comes in. Since justice is a claim that falls on others to answer, those others have a responsibility (or obligation) to fulfill that claim (or seek justice for that individual).

Heschel doesn't stop there, however. He not only acknowledges that justice "bespeaks a situation that transcends the individual,"[166] but he goes on to explain that responsibility doesn't just fall on one other person. He calls on "the whole community of men"[167] to answer the claim

[163] Heschel, *Prophets*, 209.
[164] Heschel, *Prophets*, 209.
[165] Heschel, *Prophets*, 209.
[166] Heschel, *Prophets*, 209.
[167] Heschel, *Prophets*, 210.

set upon by the situation of justice. For Heschel, the need for justice can be claimed by an entire group of people. At the same time, however, stopping injustice may necessitate action from an entire group of people as well. Thus, justice is a situation that lays a claim that all of society is responsible to fulfill.

The three areas of his "ethical dimension" are why we need Heschel. He set down the necessary formulation from which the ethical dimension in our reinterpretation can be built. Not only would our prophetic interpretation of Whitehead need moral action, justice, and obligation, but all three would have to work together and complement each other. If we want to keep the essence of the prophetic and retain the "disturbing" title, then these three ethical attributes must remain. Perhaps more importantly, as stated by Olan earlier, as long as "the spirit of the original covenant" is maintained, the prophets were free to find new formulations. I believe that the new formulations we will be discovering in later chapters will need all three attributes of the ethical dimension to maintain that spirit.

The Issue with Using Heschel

As powerful as Heschel's vision of the prophetic is, it would not be able to survive Olan's critique. The problem with Heschel's vision lies primarily in his theistic dimension. Although Heschel has most of what Olan requires, he is still working within the classical theological framework. We must remember that Heschel, ultimately, wanted to embrace the rabbinic tradition. As stated before, Heschel "insisted that Judaism demands specific patterns of behavior," and "Judaism imbues all dimensions of life with holiness."[168] His efforts to inject

[168] Heschel, *Prophets*, 426.

spirituality and meaning into Judaism centered around his understanding of the rabbinic tradition. Such meaning would only make sense if the tradition was lived through one's daily actions. As a consequence of this, however, his vision of the prophetic, and God specifically, had to fit within that framework. As positive as his relational perspective may be, all the dynamic aspects of the relationship between the Jewish people and God become problematic under the classical framework.

The problem arises because the very framework that Heschel is trying to draw a connection to is the same one Olan argues we need to move away from. Olan made it clear that, when it comes to giving meaning to human existence, a religion "must be intelligible within the culture to which it addresses itself."[169] He goes on to state that the characteristics of our current perception of reality are "relationality and indeterminacy."[170] In both the ethical and theistic dimensions, Heschel does introduce relationality, but he does not address indeterminacy. Heschel may have pushed the boundaries of the traditional framework by introducing relationality, but by staying within that framework, indeterminacy is not possible. In terms of the process-relational model, Heschel covers the relation, but not the process. Without indeterminacy, Heschel's interpretation still does not hold up to Olan's critique and his system begins to break down.

To find clues as to why this is a problem, let us turn to Heschel's response to the Holocaust. Although Heschel was criticized for not directly confronting the theological implication of the Holocaust in his writings, many believe that Heschel did have a theological

[169] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 25.
[170] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 27.

perspective that confronted the Holocaust. It simply required an exploration of his works in the years after the Holocaust to find it.

Most agree Heschel argued that the Holocaust was the result of human hands, not God's. For Heschel, the covenant and the rabbinic version of Judaism remain, and the "question of God's responsibility for the Holocaust is misplaced."[171] The horrors of the Holocaust are the results of humanity turning away from God. As the God of pathos, God cares greatly for humanity and is always available, but it is our responsibility to seek out and accept God. When we don't, things like the Holocaust become possible. Because of this, Heschel "calls for a return to Jewish piety and a return to God."[172] With the God of pathos, Heschel chose to hold on to those aspects of God that emphasize connection and caring. If those aspects are missing from the world it is because humans pushed God away. Thus, the Holocaust is the result of humans pushing God into exile.[173]

To illustrate this trend in Heschel's thinking, Robert Eisen analyzed some of Heschel's rabbinical writings. Specifically, he focused on Heschel's writings on Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael. Heschel compared their different views of God as they formed the beginnings of rabbinical Judaism in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple. Eisen argues that Heschel's response to the Holocaust can be extracted from his commentaries on each.

Heschel discussed how, according to Rabbi Akiva, God is emotionally involved in the suffering of the people of Israel. "God becomes emotionally involved in the suffering of Israel in

[171] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 111.
[172] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 111
[173] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 112.

a far more personal and intimate way, in that suffering affects His very essence."[174] For Akiva, God weeps *with* Israel, not *for* Israel. In contrast, Rabbi Ishmael based his understanding of God in rationalism and interpreted the bible non-literally. This preserved God's "exalted" status and maintained the understanding that God wanted to save the people of Israel from suffering, but as "a matter of will, not emotion."[175] For this reason, Ishmael was forced to reject Akiva's emotional connection between God and Israel.

According to Eisen, Heschel recognized that, if God is personally affected by Jewish suffering, then the doctrine of divine omnipotence might be compromised. Heschel argued that, within the context of the destruction caused by the Romans, Akiva made a choice. "Under such horrific circumstances, it was difficult to accept the notion that God was at once omnipotent and merciful."[176] Thus, confronted with his circumstances, Akiva chose to favor mercy over power. Rather than sacrifice trust in God's mercy, he chose to reduce his faith in God's might. As a result, Akiva ended up with a "positive" and "optimistic spirituality," that allowed for the people of Israel to participate in divine suffering and come closer to God.[177] Such thinking falls in line with Heschel's notion of God as pathos.

Eisen argues that Heschel's response to the Holocaust can be found in Heschel's siding with Akiva in his commentary. Heschel identified Akiva's reaction to the catastrophe in his time with Heschel's experience of the catastrophe of the Holocaust. According to Heschel, "Akiva lived in a time of unprecedented catastrophe for the Jewish people, and he grapples with that challenge by formulating a theology that accentuates the idea of divine pathos and brings new

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[174] Robert Eisen, "A. J. Heschel's Rabbinic Theology as a Response to the Holocaust," *Modern Judaism* 23, no. 3 (October 2003): 216.
[175] Eisen, "Heschel's Rabbinic Theology," 216.
[176] Eisen, "Heschel's Rabbinic Theology," 217.
[177] Eisen, "Heschel's Rabbinic Theology," 217.

meaning to it."[178] There are obvious parallels between the suffering endured in Akiva's time and the suffering in Heschel's time. I agree with Eisen's conclusion that Heschel saw such parallels and that framed his interpretation of Akiva's theology. As Eisen put it, "If we now refer back to Heschel's Holocaust theology . . . then it becomes evident that in most respects Heschel followed precisely in Akiva's footsteps."[179]

I believe this can also be seen in Heschel's overall response to the Holocaust. He does something very similar: he focuses on certain aspects of God, rather than others. By saying that humans can turn away from God and push God away, Heschel can put the responsibility of the Holocaust on humanity. By not focusing on God's other attributes, he is able to keep a god who cares and is deeply connected to humanity.

Relationality was the way in which Heschel could keep the caring and compassionate aspects of God while diminishing the role of God's power. This is the essence of what Heschel accomplished in his vision of the covenant and especially in his understanding of God's pathos. Heschel had to interpret the Holocaust in that way because he was still bound by the classical view of God. Within the classical structure, if the Holocaust is not a result of human hands, then God must have played a role. This particular line of thought has been explored by other post-Holocaust thinkers. Richard Rubenstein, for example, rejected the rabbinic understanding of God for this very reason.

Not focusing on God's power does not remove the problem of God's omnipotence from the Holocaust equation. The problem of God's power in the face of catastrophe does not go

[178] Eisen, "Heschel's Rabbinic Theology," 218.
[179] Eisen, "Heschel's Rabbinic Theology," 219.

away simply by choosing to look the other way. In several writings Heschel still speaks of God's omnipotence, but in his God of pathos, the issue inherent in God's omnipotence goes unexplained. This does not remove the issue that God is still omnipotent and thus could have (in fact, should have) done something. This is a major issue as to why the traditional notion of God does not speak to our current culture. It all boils down to the "problem of evil." As modern Jews look back at a history that includes the Holocaust, as well as the suffering of today, the idea of an all-powerful God no longer speaks to their reality. As Olan stated before, "The mood of our postmodern culture is inhospitable to this classical theology in which God can either cause a holocaust or prevent it."[180]

Heschel does the same thing with relationality. By focusing on the relational elements between God and humanity, he is able to inject spirituality and meaning into Jewish life. But in doing this, he chooses to not focus on the implications of such changes that would fundamentally alter the classical understanding of God. Applying indeterminacy to God fundamentally contradicts the classical framework of God's perfection. The idea of a perfect god is at the root of why the traditional notion of God no longer fits with our reality. The "omnis" that the traditional framework associates with God emerge out the idea that God is perfect. A perfect god automatically implies a god without limitation. Any limitation would be a type of imperfection. This understanding is contradicted by a relational god. A relation implies change. If each partner in the relation can be affected by the other (hence the definition of a relation), that automatically means that each one can in some way change the other. A changing god is an indeterminate god. By allowing that God can change, God can no longer be understood as fixed or having a determined result. This would also allow for limitations of God's power, but those

[180] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 28.

limitations are ignored through Heschel's traditional rabbinic understanding of God. Choosing not to focus on it, however, does not remove it from the situation. Relationality may imply indeterminacy, but by not resolving the indeterminate elements, Heschel's understanding of God falls under Olan's critique. If our theology does not fit with our reality, that theology becomes meaningless.

A prime example of this can be seen in the writings of Rabbi Harold S. Kushner. He wrote, "I came to believe in a Limited God, a God who could do great things but could not do all things, not because I found such a God-concept theologically required or Scripturally defensible, but because I found it morally necessary"[181] Kushner's position is based on issues surrounding the "problem of evil." His son, Aaron, was diagnosed with Progeria or "rapid aging." He watched his son's painful illness, culminating in his death just after his fourteenth birthday. Through his experiences of tragedy and loss, Kushner came up with his personal response to the fact of evil in relation to his belief in God.

Kushner's response to why bad things happen to good people involved two major elements: what God's role is, and what our proper response to evil should be in relation to God's role. Through the story of Job, he demonstrates the logical problem of evil in relation to the traditional understanding of God. Kushner presents a three-step situation: 1) God is all-powerful, 2) God is just and fair, and 3) Job is a good person. If Job remains healthy and wealthy, then all three propositions make sense with each other. Once Job begins to suffer, however, a problem with the logic emerges.[182] If Job suffers, "we can no longer make sense of

[181] Harold Kushner, "Would an All-Powerful God Be Worthy of Worship?," in *Jewish Theology and Process Thought*, ed. Sandra Lubarsky and David Griffin (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 89.
[182] Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1981), 35.

all three propositions together. We can now affirm any two only by denying the third."[183] Through the experience of Job, Kushner illustrates the core problem of understanding evil in the world in relation to God. In order to make reality of his life fit with his theory of how God works, Job must reject one of the propositions to affirm other two.

In order to explain what is happening to him, Job decides to reject God's goodness (proposition #2). Kushner, wanting to affirm God's goodness, decides to take a different route by rejecting proposition #1, the notion of God as all-powerful. He states, "Bad things do happen to good people in this world, but it is not God who wills it. God would like people to get what they deserve, but [God] cannot always arrange it."[184] The importance of this is paramount for Kushner. Once we realize that God is not the cause of our suffering, we can see God as always with us and never opposed to us. As Kushner puts it, "we are still on God's side, and [God] is on ours."[185] Thus, we can still have faith that God wants what is best for us. By keeping God's goodness, Kushner felt it was morally justifiable to keep his faith in God.

To make this work, Kushner chose to recognize indeterminate aspects of our reality. He explains his idea of God by exploring the notion that randomness and indeterminacy exist in the world. Drawing similar conclusions as Olan, he argues that, if randomness and indeterminacy truly exist, then there are real implications for the traditional understanding of God's power. As discussed above, if indeterminacy exists in God, there must be a limitation of some kind. For Kushner, in comparing the traditional understanding of God with his reality, the limitation that makes the most sense is a limitation to God's power.

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[183] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 36.
[184] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 37.
[185] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 37.

Kushner takes this line of thinking even further. If the power of God is limited, then God is not controlling every aspect of creation. If God is not controlling every aspect of creation, then there are things that happen independent of God's will. These independent occurrences do not have a guiding force, they just happen. To explain the fact of randomness and indeterminacy in the world in relation to God, Kushner goes back to the beginning of creation. He postulates that creation is "not to make something out of nothing, but to make order out of chaos."[186] Therefore, if creation is indeed the making of order out of chaos, then "suppose that creation, the process of replacing chaos with order, were still going on?"[187] This is a very important idea for Kushner because it allows for the possibility of the existence of evil in our world. For Kushner, "randomness is another name for chaos," so if chaos still exists, then randomness must also exist.[188] If randomness exists, then this allows for the fact that, for no discernible reason, some things just happen. A fact of our reality is that some of the things that "just happen" in our world can be quite horrible.

These events, for Kushner, do not happen because God wills them. He presents this argument to illustrate that, when evil events occur, they "do not reflect God's choices."[189] In regard to randomness, he states that "we will simply have to learn to live with it, sustained and comforted by the knowledge that the earthquake and the accident . . . are not the will of God, but represent that aspect of reality which stands independent of [God's] will."[190] The existence of randomness means that some bad things can happen for no reason and this is something that we simply have to accept. It also means that God has nothing to do with it.

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[186] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 51.
[187] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 52.
[188] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 53.
[189] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 53.
[190] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 55.

Kushner's next step is to illustrate how we are to understand God's role (or lack thereof) in the events that happen in the world. For Kushner, nature and human freedom are the two aspects of the world that must be taken into account in relation to God. Nature is morally neutral. Good and bad people alike must contend with every aspect of nature in this world. Natural disasters, manmade calamities, sickness, pain, and death are all considered by Kushner to be directed by the laws of nature. All these are aspects of nature that are not only out of our control, but also out of God's control. In each case "God does not cause it and God cannot stop it."[191] Airplane crashes, tornados, injuries, and sickness are not "acts of God." They are all consequences of nature that must be contended with, if we are to live in this world.

Kushner also illustrates how human freedom must also be a limiting factor to the power of God. If we are to be considered moral creatures, we must have the freedom to choose to be moral. If humanity "can show [itself] as being virtuous by freely choosing the good when bad is equally possible, then [humanity] has to be free to choose the bad also."[192] If humans are moral creatures, then it is necessary that they be free. If God controlled our responses, our morality would only be an illusion. This again means that God must have limitations. Kushner explains that, "Our moral freedom means that, if we choose to be selfish and dishonest, we can *be* selfish and dishonest, and God will not stop us."[193] In order for humans to be accountable for their actions, the power of God must be limited.

Because the traditional understanding of God did not fit with Kushner's reality, he was forced to reject the traditional framework. The issue of God's power could not be simply put aside. For Kushner, God's role must be different than that of the traditional Jewish theological

[191] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 58.
[192] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 79.
[193] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 80.

framework. God is not omnipotent; God must be limited. What this means for us is that suffering and pain do not come upon us from God. As Kushner stated before, God does not cause evil and cannot stop it. If this is the case, then we must not only reshape our thinking of how God relates to the world, but also how we relate to God.

Olan's conclusion ultimately coincides with Kushner. Although Olan takes a more philosophical approach, they both end up at the same place. Olan observed that "indeterminacy is an integral character of matter," and that "alternatives and chance are inherently part of reality."[194] This means that indeterminacy must be part of our theology. Indeterminate, in its most basic definition, refers to something "not definitely or precisely determined or fixed" or an event that does not lead "to a definite end or result."[195] If this is an accepted aspect of reality, then our understanding of God must be able to incorporate the understanding that God is not fixed or does not lead to a definite result. Turning to relationality alone, as Heschel does, cannot account for this part of reality and thus cannot overcome Olan's critique. Although it does lay a foundation for spiritual connection and meaning, it does not overcome the fact that God does not fit with our reality.

Kushner would agree that a shift in thinking is needed. If God is limited and randomness exists, then God's direct action in the world would seem greatly diminished from the traditional view. If the role of God is decreased, then the role of humanity must be increased. If we can no longer find meaning in "God's plan," then perhaps we can find meaning for ourselves. He suggests that "the bad things that happen to us in our lives do not have a meaning when they happen to us. . . But we can give them meaning. We can redeem these tragedies from

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[194] Olan, "The Prophetic Faith," 27.
[195] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v., accessed February 10, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indeterminate.

senselessness by imposing meaning on them."[196] How do we find meaning? Kushner believes that we must start by asking the right questions when bad things happen. We need to stop asking "why did this happen to me?" or "what did I do to deserve this?" and begin to ask, "now that this has happened to me, what do I do about it?" By doing this, we begin to refocus our energies to a more positive sensibility. Instead of putting all our strength and energy into something that we cannot change or control, by asking the right question, we focus our energy on what we can change. As Kushner explains, "We too need to get over the questions that focus on the past and on the pain . . . and ask instead the question which opens doors to the future."[197] Kushner realizes that to center on the question of "why?" only causes people to center on the suffering and pain they are experiencing. It does not allow those who suffer a way of moving past it. To ask the question of "what now?" allows people to look past their suffering and begin to grow beyond it.

Asking "what now" is a call to action. This is why we need the prophetic. In attempting to make the prophetic compatible with the classical theological view, however, the meaning Heschel is attempting find in the prophetic will eventually fall on deaf ears. Simply not focusing on the traditional attributes that are undesirable is not enough. In order to make Heschel's prophetic vision truly meaningful to Jews today, we need a reinterpretation that can fit with our post-modern perspective. In the end, what we need is a new framework for the theological, as well as ethical, dimensions of the prophetic. This new framework must be able to keep the essence of Heschel's relational understanding of God, the covenant, and prophetic, but also be

[196] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 136.
[197] Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 137.

able to sustain itself under the critique of a scientific/secular worldview based in indeterminacy, as well as relationality.

Chapter 3 – Building a Process Prophetic

The purpose of this chapter is to put Heschel and Whitehead together and see if we can begin construction of a Process Prophetic. In Chapter One we took at detailed look at Whitehead's process-relational system. We found an ongoing system of beauty and value based on the constant tension of contrasts between order and disorder, harmony and discord. Most importantly, we also found a new model for God. It is model fully integrated into Whitehead's process-relational system. As an integrated part of the system, this model fits with both of Olan's requirements of relationality and indeterminacy. We also found, however, that there is one possible short-coming with using Whitehead's system. By founding his system on aesthetics, Whitehead did not focus much on ethics. Although the use of aesthetics solves many issues confronting modernity, his lack of focus on ethics may pose a problem for our effort of reinterpreting an ethical tradition.

In Chapter Two we found that Heschel's vision of the prophetic best fits our needs. Heschel's focus on moral action, justice, and obligation works very well to meet the needs of Ellis and his requirement to return to an ethical tradition. But, at the same time, we found a problem. Although Heschel's relationality brings us closer to meeting the requirements of Olan, the fact that Heschel stays within the confines of traditional theism is a serious point of contention. The traditional theism Heschel stays with is exactly the classical model Olan wants to confront.

If we want to build a Process Prophetic that meets the demands of both Olan and Ellis, we need to find a way to integrate necessary aspects of both Whitehead and Heschel. We need to interpret each one through the lens of the other. We need to keep Whitehead's metaphysics and theism, but reinterpret his ethics through Heschel's ethical tradition. We also want to keep

Heschel's ethics and God of pathos, but reinterpret his theism through Whitehead's metaphysics. If this can be accomplished, we will be able to illustrate how the visions of Heschel and Whitehead can come together to form a dynamic prophetic system.

First, if we are going to attempt an ethical interpretation of Whitehead, we need to know what we are working with. Once we understand how Whitehead incorporates morality into his system, then we can find out how to interpret that system through Heschel. An important aspect of this will be to extract an understanding of morality from Whitehead's system and discern what ethical motivation or purpose can be found within Whitehead's philosophy. This effort can prove difficult, however, because Whitehead himself never created a unified moral system within his philosophy. That is not to say that a moral or ethical outlook cannot be discerned from his work; it just means that a system will need to be established in order to bring it together.

Morality in Whitehead

If we are going to extract a moral understanding from Whitehead's work, the search needs to begin with piecing together what he said about ethics and morality. He made many references to morality throughout his different writings and, at first glance, they may seem scattered and strange. With a closer look, however, common threads can be found.

In *Process and Reali*ty, Whitehead states that "[m]orality of outlook is inseparably conjoined with generality of outlook,"[198] and that "[t]he greater part of morality hinges on the determination of relevance in the future."[199] In *Adventure of Ideas* he says that "the effect of the

[198] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 14.
[199] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 27.

present on the future is the business of morals."[200] He then goes on to say that "[m]orality consists in the aim at the ideal, and at its lowest it concerns the preservation of relapse to lower levels,"[201] and that "the moral code is the behavior-patterns which in the environment for which it was designed will promote the evolution of the environment towards its proper perfection."[202]

It is in *Modes of Thought* that Whitehead addresses morality at some length. He states that "morality does not indicate what you are to do in mythological abstraction. It does concern the general ideal which should be the justification for any particular objective."[203] Whitehead then goes on to say that "morality is always the aim at the union of harmony, intensity, and vividness which involves the perfection of importance for that occasion."[204] He then adds "[w]hether we destroy, or whether we preserve, our action is moral if we have thereby safeguarded the importance of experience so far as it depends on the concrete instance in the world's history,"[205] and that "the terms *morality, logic, religion, art,* have each of them been claimed as exhausting the whole meaning of importance. Each of them denotes a subordinate species. But the genus stretches beyond any finite group of species."[206] Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Whitehead states that "morality consists in the control of process so as to maximize importance."[207]

In looking at these statements about morality, four key concepts emerge: the future, ideals, perfection, and importance. All four concepts play a role in our final analysis, but for our

[200] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 269.
[201] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 269.
[202] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 292.
[203] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 15.
[204] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 14.
[205] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 15.
[206] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 11.
[207] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 13.

immediate purposes, they point to one very important initial criterion. All of these concepts point to the fact that Whitehead locates morality within his overall metaphysical scheme. From Whitehead's perspective, they are all related and have everything to do with the processive nature of his metaphysics. From this we can assume that any interpretation of morality in Whitehead's system must be equally processive.[208] Thus, for this to work, morality must be ongoing, open-ended, and dynamic. Any concept of morality that is static or universal to all times and places would not be able to fit into this system. In fact, when it comes to morality, Whitehead specifically states that "there is no one behavior system belonging to the essential character of the universe, as the universal moral ideal. What is universal is the spirit which should permeate any behavior system in the circumstances of its adoption."[209] If processive, that "spirit" must be ever moving and ever changing. That "spirit" is what I am attempting to locate and nail down within the prophetic.

Importance in Whitehead

Although Whitehead's concept of importance plays prominently in his statements on morality, finding what he meant by importance can be a bit of a challenge. Whitehead himself states that the definition of importance is difficult to pin down. "Importance is a generic notion which has been obscured by the overwhelming prominence of a few of its innumerable species."[210] Thus, importance cannot be narrowed down to just one thing, and any attempt to do so would make it even more difficult to define. He goes on to explain that human society has

[208] Paul A. Schilpp, "Whitehead's Moral Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Shilpp (Illinois: Open Court, 1951), 568.
[209] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 14.
[210] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 11.

tried to encompass importance into things like morality, logic, religion, and art. But for Whitehead, these are merely the few "subordinate species" of importance, and "the genus stretches beyond any finite group of species."[211] By using the language of genus and species, he makes it clear that importance is something much larger in meaning than any of the other factors on their own. Morality, logic, religion, and art may be elements within importance, but cannot completely define it on their own. In the end, Whitehead states that "no one of these specializations exhausts the final unity of purpose in the world."[212]

By focusing on "unity of purpose," Whitehead gives us a clue of what he means by importance. Ron Stanway, in his article "Whitehead on the Concept of 'Importance,'" explains that "unity" and "purpose" are essential for understanding Whitehead's notion of importance, but its specific meaning depends on what unity we are referring to and for what purpose.[213] He points out that Whitehead breaks up his notion of importance into two areas, "interest" and "importance." Whitehead explains that "one [is] based on the unity of the Universe, the other on the individuality of the details. The word *interest* suggests the latter aspect; the word *importance* leans toward the former."[214] Thus, when it comes to "unity of purpose" for importance, it depends on which unity we are referring to. Stanway described unity of purpose as "the ideal purposefulness," that "seeks at the highest level of intensity."[215] The unity of purpose can be understood as the culminating reason or motivation of an action toward achieving the highest level of intensity. The question then becomes, is that motivation for higher intensity strictly for the individual, or the whole universe? If it is working toward the unity for the individual, then

[211] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 11.
[212] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 12.
[213] Ross Stanway, "Whitehead on the Concept of Importance," *Process Studies* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 2.
[214] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 8.
[215] Stanway, "Concept of Importance," 2.

we are talking about "interest." If, however, it is working toward the unity of the universe as a whole, then we are talking about "importance."

Both are related and encompass the full scope of importance. But Whitehead makes a point of stating that the notion of importance "can be inadequately defined as 'interest involving that intensity of individual feeling which leads to publicity of expression.'"[216] In this way, he emphasizes that, although importance does encompass the individual, it also encompasses the universe far beyond the individual. As Stanway explains, importance is referring to a unity that must be "applied to the universe itself in its unlimited and inclusive connectedness"[217]

Whitehead goes on to explain that "the generic aim of process is the attainment of importance"[218] and that importance "is the aim at greatness of experience."[219] Putting these two statements together, it appears that the generic aim of process is greatness of experience. So what is greatness of experience according to Whitehead? Greatness of experience has everything to do with the creative advance of the universe and what he calls higher levels of experience. As we have seen in the explanation of process in Chapter Two, higher levels of experience have everything to do with "stronger" beauty through higher levels of intensity. If importance is the "ideal purposefulness" that seeks the highest levels of intensity, then importance refers to the motivation of the universe to achieve higher intensities, and thus higher levels of experience. If we attempted to sum up the goal of Whitehead's metaphysical system, his use of the term importance would be a good place to start. It encompasses the goal of higher harmonies, of greater contrasts that lead to greater levels of intensity, or of higher levels of experience.

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[216] Stanway, "Concept of Importance," 3.
[217] Stanway, "Concept of Importance," 3.
[218] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 12.
[219] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 13.

Finally, if Whitehead's concept of importance is understood as a purpose toward higher levels of experience, then it all must come down to Whitehead's understanding of value. In his book *The Ethics of Creativity*, Brian Henning points out that importance and value in Whitehead's philosophy are "ontologically equivalent."[220] This is because, like beauty in Whitehead's system, both "are described at different times as the ultimate aim of the universe."[221] So, when Whitehead states that importance is "the aim at the greatness of experience," he is referring specifically to greater beauty and value in experience.[222]

Henning goes on to argue that this is the basis of morality in Whitehead. He states that "if morality aims at maximizing importance and importance is equivalent to value, it is valid to conclude that morality aims at maximizing value."[223] By essentially equating importance, beauty, and value and applying that to Whitehead's notion of morality, Henning concludes that any action that moves toward higher importance, beauty, and value is understood as moral. Also, since every actual thing in existence has value at some level, then every relation can be seen as moral on some level.

With this understanding of morality in Whitehead's system, the task now is to see if we can use it to meet Heschel's ethical criteria. Can Whitehead's notion of morality as maximizing beauty and value provide a suitable framework for Heschel's vision of moral action, justice and obligation? What follows is a detailed look into each one to see if all three can fit into Whitehead's framework.

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[220] Brian Henning, *The Ethics of Creativity: Beauty, Morality and Nature in a Processive Cosmos* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 132.
[221] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 129.
[222] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 14.
[223] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 133.

Moral Action

Whitehead's understanding of morality as maximizing importance/value can be directly applied to Heschel's understanding of moral action. Heschel defines a moral act as the "intense regard and concern for fellow man."[224] For our reinterpretation, we will focus on the "intense" aspect of that definition. In Whitehead's system, moral actions are those that bring about higher intensities. In this new system, moral action is prompted and defined by Whitehead's understanding of intensity and how value can be realized. What we judge as moral action comes from our attempt to do what is necessary now to reach higher intensities and thus higher value. Moral actions are those specific actions that create the possibility for higher and more intense experiences. By doing so, moral action means being an active participant in improving the world in which we live.

In Whitehead's process-relational system, the consequences of human actions (both positive and negative) are far-reaching. With the level of freedom human consciousness allows, human action has the increased potential to maintain higher social structures or to destroy them. If higher structures were able to be maintained, then higher harmonies and intensities would result. In this way, human actions could be seen as "moral actions." They would be actions that resulted in higher intensities by maintaining the structure necessary to produce higher harmonies. This understanding of moral action is still an "intense" regard for fellow human beings. Ethical structures are necessary in the attempt to maximize importance, which means moving toward higher intensities. David Griffin stated that "the only general principle is that in any concrete

[224] Heschel, *Prophets*, 257

situation we should seek to maximize importance insofar as it is attainable by us in that situation."[225] Thus, moral action is grounded in seeking out those actions that produce the maximization of stronger beauty and importance. Since both are built out of tensions that lead to higher intensities, moral action can be defined by those actions that bring about higher intensity (thus higher value), not simply for the individual, but for the society as a whole.

Going even further, these actions create the structures that can sustain such experiences. In line with Griffin, John Cobb stated that "[r]ight conduct must be directed toward the realization of higher values."[226] This goes back to the discussion regarding what constitutes the "relevant future." If we are motivated to act toward maximizing the "general ideal" of value and beauty, as well as for individual enjoyment, then those actions must also apply to human societies and the structures that sustain them. Cobb goes on to explain that moral codes can be judged by how best they promote "that kind of order which promotes maximum attainment in the strength of beauty."[227] Moral action, then, goes beyond the individual. The order necessary to promote stronger beauty would have to include the environment (social and natural) which sustains those individuals. This is why Cobb applies this standard to humans, non-humans, and society in general.

This bolsters, as well as slightly alters, the notion of moral action in the prophetic tradition. Moral action is still built around the intense regard for fellow human beings, and that intensity is still focused on individuals as well as unjust structures in society. But now the

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[225] David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 305.
[226] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 62.
[227] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 65.

motivation for such action becomes a force toward activity. In this way, the intensity for the prophet remains, but this intensity is now much more dynamic.

While the intensity does refer to the relation of the prophet to his/her fellow humans, it also refers to the prophet's relation to the entire world. By understanding that moral action seeks out higher intensities, it opens up the realization that these intensities must go beyond humans and include the world in which we live. If intensities and value have to do with all of experience (not just ours), then moral action must be extended to all living things and the order that sustains them. Thus, moral action would include ecological responsibility as well as social responsibility.

Good and Evil in Moral Action

When it comes to moral action, Heschel also included the prophets' "comprehension of social, political, and religious evils."[228] Although Heschel argues that the role of the prophet would include fighting such evils, this comprehension informs the conversation of the role of the prophet in the pursuit of the Good. We have discussed morality at length in regard to Whitehead's philosophy, but we have not explored the subject of good and evil. With Heschel including an understanding of evil in the prophetic, a brief discussion would be useful, especially if that discussion includes how the Good fits into our new prophetic scheme.

For Whitehead, there was no easy definition of evil or simple way to illustrate how evil relates to the world. The most general way that evil can be understood on a metaphysical level is that it is a disruption of a system (or society of actual entities) that leads to the degradation of that system. The evil is not found in the disrupting agent, but it is found in the degradation that

[228] Heschel, *Prophets*, 204.

is caused by it. Whitehead defined evil in several ways. First, he described the character of evil as "a destructive agent among things greater than itself."[229] Second, he stated that "evil is exhibited in physical suffering, mental suffering, and loss of higher experience in favour of lower experience."[230] Finally, these notions of evil lead to his final description as a fact in which there is a "realization of a purpose towards elimination."[231] These definitions are intimately related to each other and each expresses a different aspect of degradation. All three, however, are referring to the slipping from higher, more intense levels of experience to lower, less intense levels.

On a metaphysical level, degradation can be understood as the movement to lower stages of experience due to the breakdown of an ordered system. As we discussed in Chapter Two, an ordered system is important here because it is only through more complex societies that higher levels of experience can be maintained. It is the emergence of these more complex societies that makes possible the higher levels of intensity needed for higher levels of experience. With more complex societies, more contrasts can be held together and therefore higher levels of experience are possible.

We also learned from Chapter Two that, if order is needed to sustain a system that can support more complex occasions, then disorder breaks down or enfeebles that supporting system. This enfeeblement comes out of the effect of disorder, which is the breaking down of the supporting system that allows for more complexity. That breakdown reduces the ability to achieve higher levels of intensity. This being the case, the degradation of order has a direct effect on the degradation of experience felt by the previously ordered society. This lapse toward

[229]Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 95.

[230]Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 95.

[231]Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 95.

slighter actuality is due to the degradation of the supporting system as a whole. The movement toward chaos, understood as degradation, is the movement away from the ability to sustain higher levels of actuality. Due to this degradation, evil is exhibited through the "loss of higher experience in favour of lower experience."[232] The move toward chaos, as degradation, can be seen as an exhibition of evil.

To fully understand what Whitehead means by "the loss of higher experience in favour of lower experience," he uses the analogy of a man reduced to the experiences of a hog.[233] The hog is not in itself evil. Even the man acting like a hog is not in itself evil. The evil emerges when the man reduced to a hog is compared with the possibility of the man reaching his potential as a man. As a human being, it is possible to achieve higher levels of experience than as a hog. The evil emerges when the man, as the hog, is compared to the potential of the man, as a man. For Whitehead, "the evil of the degradation lies in the comparison of what is with what might have been."[234] This is why the movement to a lower stage from a higher stage can be understood as exhibiting evil. The degradation from higher levels is the loss of what might have been if the movement to a lower stage had not occurred. Understanding evil in this way emphasizes the fact that the world would always be a better place if the evil had never occurred. The potential of what could have been is always going to be greater than what it is, when evil is present.

Again, to be clear, chaos and disorder are not evil in and of themselves. The fact that they exist does not make them evil. The exhibition of evil is found in the movement from order toward disorder, from harmony toward chaos, from higher states of being to lower stages. Only

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[232]Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 95.

[233] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 95.

[234]Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 97.

with this movement can the comparison be made. It is the exhibition of evil because it takes on the character of evil. This is why Whitehead describes the character of evil as "a destructive agent among things greater than itself."[235] Chaos and disorder by themselves are not destructive toward anything. But once higher experience is lost in favor of lower experience, that movement can be understood as evil because it is a destructive agent in that system.

The third definition is an extension of the first two. Up to this point, evil has been understood as the effect of degradation, and the comparison found in the lapse in actuality. The third definition expresses the perpetual tendencies possible in a degrading system. If the degradation of the system were to go so far and stop, the system as a whole would still continue to be productive, but only at a lower level of experience. The problem is that evil has the potential to go much further and inflict much greater damage. Whitehead's third definition pinpoints this most threatening characteristic of evil. As stated earlier, the character of evil is a fact in which there is a "realization of a purpose towards elimination."[236] This is what can be described as the rippling effect of evil. This ripple effect is the ability of evil to continuously perpetuate degradation within a system until complete elimination is the final result.

When all three definitions are put together, a full picture of evil emerges. When the prevailing order is disrupted and a chaotic element emerges, the ordered system can no longer maintain the order necessary to sustain that particular level of experience. This fall in actuality emerges as evil, when compared to the level of actuality it would have been if the chaotic element had not occurred. The problem is perpetuated when the chaotic element is not

[235]Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 95.

[236]Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 95.

incorporated into the system and the order of the system is forced to degrade even further. If the degradation is extreme, the destruction would remain dominant, leading to a continual lapse in actuality. In this case, evil would be expressed through the resulting elimination of the system. As Whitehead states, we must "leave unshaken the fundamental position that 'destruction as a dominant fact in experience' is the correct definition of evil."[237] Within each system of actual occasions, the risk of this evil is always possible each time chaos or disorder is introduced into an ordered system.

Whitehead's notion of comparison is the key to his understanding of evil. With each lapse in actuality, the greater is the evil. The greater the difference between what was and what is, the more apparent the evil becomes. Whitehead once stated that "tragedy is the disclosure of an ideal"[238] The full scope of evil is found when compared to the ideal of what might have been. In the case where the system is eliminated, or died, the magnitude of the evil becomes clear. If the disruptive agent is not dealt with, the final evil can be ultimately tragic.

This self-perpetuating destruction is the worst-case scenario. At any point the destructive element can be incorporated into the system. This means that the system has found a way to overcome the disruptive element by finding a new way to sustain order. Once this has taken place, the degradation is stopped, and the effects of evil are overcome.

This notion of incorporation is the key to overcoming evil. Once the element of evil is introduced into a system, a decision must be made. Two options exist: 1) the element can be discarded and left to degrade the system even further, or 2) the disruptive element can be

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[237]Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 259.

[238] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 286.

creatively incorporated into the system. The incorporation of evil by a system means that the system must find a new harmony or new way of maintaining order. The system must adjust to the fact of its existence and find a way to grow forward by working with it or around it. To do this requires more complexity within the system. If this evil element was successfully incorporated into the ordered society so that a new order could be maintained, it would mean the growth of that society into an increasingly complex society. It would be more complex because it would be able to keep the contrasts presented without discarding them. The system now has the potential to evolve which, in turn, creates the potential for higher levels of experience.

With this understanding of evil, what does it mean for Whitehead's notion of good? In *Adventure of Ideas*, Whitehead states, "The real world is good when it is beautiful."[239] Beauty is the indication of value. Thus, the real world is good when it is valuable. But there is not one kind of value. A comparison can be made between simple and more complex value. Going back to John Cobb's analogy of comparing the wall with the painting, the wall is valuable in its limited harmony, but compared to the painting, the painting's level of value goes up due to its complexity. Does this mean we can have something "more good," just as we can have something more beautiful? If this is the case, then how do we understand the measurement of the good achieved? Is it simply the same as being more beautiful, or is it better understood in a slightly different way?

Whitehead's understanding of evil could give us insight into understanding good. If evil emerges out of comparison, then good can be measured in the same way. As the opposite of evil, good emerges out of the comparison of the gaining of higher experience from lower

[239] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 268.

experience. This would fit Whitehead's explanation that evil as active and destructive while good is active and creative.[240] Both play a vital role in his system, just from different ends.

In his article "Mathematics and the Good," Whitehead emphasized the need for pattern when it came to understanding the Good.[241] In interpreting Whitehead, John Goheen argued that pattern by itself was not enough. Goheen explained that, when it comes to the necessary conditions for value, two things were needed – pattern and activity. "Pattern and activity, the most general ontological conditions, are at the same time the sufficient and necessary conditions for value."[242] This goes along with Whitehead's overall process scheme and his understanding of value.

When it comes to the Good, however, this combination of pattern and activity also applies. Whitehead hints that this when he states "the infusion of pattern into natural occurrences, and the stability of such patterns, and the modification of such patterns, is the necessary condition for the realization of the Good."[243] The "infusion of pattern" obviously refer to the pattern needed, but less obvious is that the "stability" and "modification" of such patterns refers to activity. As we have explored, Whitehead's system is one of never ending process. It is a constant becoming of past, present, and even future elements to create the world we experience. This constant becoming is the activity Goheen was referring to. Stability and modification may seem like contradicting terms, but they make perfect sense in Whitehead's system. In order for the process to continue, you need a balance of both.

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[240] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 93.
[241] Alfred North Whitehead, "Mathematics and the Good," in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Schilpp (Illinois: Open Court, 1951), 677-680.
[242] John Goheen, "Whitehead's Theory of Value," in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Schilpp (Illinois: Open Court, 1951), 439.
[243] Whitehead, "Mathematics and the Good," 678.

However, each one alone coupled with pattern would give rise to some form of value. Pattern and stability without modification is merely repetition, and pattern and modification without stability is merely change.[244] Thus, we need the activity that emerges out of the balancing of the two. Putting it all together, the necessary conditions for the realization of the Good come out of the right kind of pattern coupled together with the right kind of balance between stability and modification.

Now that the conditions are set, what actually is the realization of the Good? In "Mathematics and the Good," Whitehead also speaks of the "fortunate modifications" of pattern.[245] For Goheen, this means that there is one further condition for the realization of the Good that goes beyond just infusion, stability, and modification. "Fortunate" modification must be taken into account in relation to pattern and stability. But now the question arises, what would constitute a "fortunate" modification?

In our analysis of Whitehead's system, especially in the context of morality, what constitutes "fortunate" modification is quite clear. Through his explanations of beauty, value, and importance, as well as his use of ideals and his teleological outlook, Whitehead has constantly focused on the progression toward "greatness of experience" through higher intensities. All of this points to the maximization of beauty in his system. Thus, when he states that "the real world is good when it is beautiful" it's quite clear that what is good is related to that maximization.[246] When you apply all of this to Whitehead's reference to "fortunate modifications," it can be argued, quite successfully, that the movement toward higher forms of

[244] Goheen, "Whitehead's Theory of Value," 440.
[245] Whitehead, "Mathematics and the Good," 677.
[246] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 268.

beauty in experience is a proper interpretation. This means that a "fortunate modification" can be seen as good.

Like the fact that evil is experienced as a process of activity, the actual good to be realized can only be seen in comparison to what it was. Thus, when it comes to the proper infusion, stability, and modification of pattern, all three are necessary conditions for advancement of the good, but the realization of that good comes in the comparison. This understanding falls in line with Whitehead's statement that "[e]vil is positive and destructive; what is good is positive and creative."[247] This indicates that both evil and good are active processes; the only question is whether each process is destructive (moving to lower levels) or creative (moving to higher levels). But the measurement of that movement can only happen through comparison.

As the disruptive element, the prophet could be understood as introducing the novel element which can produce good or evil, depending on the outcome. But the goal of the prophet, especially in the context of moral action, is to fight for social change and build social structures that can better sustain higher intensities. This could very well be categorized as working toward the Good. The prophet is working toward the "fortunate modification" that produces the proper infusion, stability, and modification of pattern. In this way, the actions of the prophet can be described as good. If successful, the new higher reality can be compared to the previous lower one, and through the comparison, it can be concluded that good came from it.

When it comes to moral action, we can see how this would work in our actual lives. Earlier, I have quoted Whitehead stating that evil was exhibited in “physical suffering, mental

[247] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 96.

suffering and the loss of higher experience in favour of lower experience."[248] By explaining this definition of evil I have shown that, according to the metaphysics, evil is exhibited in the degradation of a system. For us, this degradation is felt as physical or mental suffering. To put it in the simplest terms, when we experience horrible and evil things, we feel pain. When Rabbi Kushner watched his son die day by day, he felt pain. The loss of a loved one is only one example. When someone is crippled by a drunk driver, that person feels pain. When a family is ripped apart by the effects of an oppressive government, members of that family feel pain. It is because of such pain that our way of being starts to break down, or degrade.

Each one of us has our own sense of order and harmony that makes up who we are. This order and harmony are found in the balance we have come to in our way of being who we are. Most of us do not think much about it; we are just who we are. But the reality is that all of us, through our lives, have had to come to some balance (meaning some kind of order or harmony) in order to sustain ourselves through our lives. When something horrible happens to us, that balance (or order) is disrupted and that previous balance no longer works to sustain who we are after such an experience.

Because of the pain caused by what has happened, our balance is disrupted and we start to fall into depression or become angry and hateful. In either case, it could be said that we fall into slighter ways of being than we were before. In the state of depression or hate, we close our selves off to the possibilities of happiness and growth. We fall instead into a state of being that can only promote stagnation, resentment, and more pain.

[248] Whitehead, *Religion in Making*, 95.

The evil becomes apparent when people, in this slighter state of being, are compared to the people they might have been if such pain had not been caused. This is how Whitehead's statement "loss of higher experience in favour for lower experience" applies to us. The evil of an event becomes apparent to us when who we are, as depressed and angry, is compared to whom we could have been if the pain had not been caused.

This fall into slighter ways of being also has the danger of going even further – so far, in fact, that we can end up destroying ourselves as well as those around us. If we let such suffering consume us, we can become increasingly depressed or angry and hateful. This can end up destroying us if we let ourselves develop into a destructive pattern. For those who become too depressed, suicide may be the result. Others can get so lost in their anger and hate that they only work toward the destruction of their lives. All of these things also affect everyone around us. The fall into depression greatly affects those who love that person. The fall into hatred greatly affects those who attempt to share their love for that person. In each case, those who are closest to the victims of suffering begin to suffer themselves. They too then run the risk of falling into slighter ways of being which affects even more people. In this way, even the rippling effect of evil applies to us. We can experience an event that causes us pain (disruptive agent), which can cause us to move toward slighter ways of being who we are (degradation), and this move can then affect others.

As I mentioned before, such effects of evil are worst-case scenarios. At any point along the path the effects of evil can be stopped. They can be stopped when we are able to incorporate the evil into who we are and become transformed by it. How does this work? It works in the same way it does for every other aspect of existence. As I have explained above, each one of us has our own sense of order and harmony that makes us who we are. It is this sense of harmony

or balance that makes up our way of being. When tragedy strikes and we feel pain, the way of being who we are gets scrambled and begins to break down. In the face of such pain, we find that our old way of being is no longer enough to keep us going. To exist the old way would only bring us more pain because the effects of the tragedy remains dominant in who we are. The only way to reduce the pain and stop the depression and anger is to incorporate the evil into who we are and be transformed by it. To incorporate the evil into who we are means that we must find a way to bring that evil into ourselves and find a new way of being that can sustain us in spite of the evil presented. To find transformation means that, through incorporation, we find a new sense of harmony and balance of who we are that we can grow and find happiness even while living with that tragedy.

This applies directly to the social, political, and religious evils Heschel was referring to. Since we live in a relational universe, this process has an effect on everything around us, and thus moral action applies to everyone around us. As we have seen through the explanation of the Good, the movement between different levels of experience can happen in a positive as well as negative direction. When we find ourselves broken down by evil, this degradation also affects those closest to us. The effect has the potential to begin their breakdown. By actualizing God's ideal through the initial aim, we begin to affect the people closest to us in the same fashion. This time, however, it is a positive effect and not a negative one. Such moral actions can culminate in the transformation of ourselves and as well as society. Through moral action, we begin the process of transforming those around us. Instead of allowing social institutions to propel us tumbling toward elimination and death, we begin to push forward and upward toward love and justice.

Justice

As stated at the end of Chapter One, Whitehead did not explore the concept of justice in his philosophy. I do believe, however, that Heschel's understanding of justice can be integrated into the metaphysics of Whitehead. Heschel defines justice as a "dynamic relation," an "ongoing challenge," and a "mode of action."[249] These definitions can be extracted from Whitehead's system by focusing on his understanding of how beauty and value emerge out of contrasts and tensions. The best way to define justice in Whitehead is that it "opens up the future." Along with everything else in his system, justice cannot be a fixed standard or rule. If we want it to remain dynamic, we can never break it down into anything concrete. It is important to note that none of Heschel's definitions are, in themselves, concrete. This opens the possibility that the two systems may be compatible. The goal of this section to it use this "non-concreteness" to our advantage, and to come up with an understanding of justice that can be described as creating a space in which change and challenge are possible.

Theopoetic Justice – Faber's Perspective

As mentioned previously, there is a rather large silence in Whitehead's philosophy when it comes to justice. This silence continued to some degree with those who came after Whitehead. For this reason, there are not many points of comparison when it comes to finding different interpretations of justice in Whitehead. There is one interpretation that is important to note, however. Dr. Roland Faber offered a vision of justice in Whitehead in his lecture on Theopoetic Justice.

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[249] Heschel, *Prophets*, 253.

Faber began with the recognition that justice in Whitehead might be better understood if it was situated in Whitehead's ethical perspective. He observes that, if Whitehead's system is understood as an "ecological cosmology," then that particular cosmology "is not primordially concerned with humanity." [250] From this, Faber argues that whatever ethic can be found in Whitehead's system must be interpreted from the entire system as a whole, not just for human interest or concern.

Faber builds this argument on the notion that ethics in Whitehead "is about the *ecological character* of the 'cosmos' – it is kind of virtue ethics."[251] To understand this, we need to first find what he means by "ecological character," and second, how that fits into virtue ethics. For Faber, this ecological character is "grounded in the togetherness of multiplicity that undermines the Cartesian independence of realms of existence . . . Instead, multiplicities are always *experiments*, discordance *in* the moment of their *aesthetic* togetherness, and an issuing forth of new discordances for new experiments."[252] When it comes to ecological character, Faber is referring to the fact that our universe has the trait of existing in a multiplicity that works together and is interdependent in the constant creation of that universe. But, in doing so, every element of the multiplicity is still separate and never fully unified. Thus we live in a constant flux of different kinds of ever-changing relational separateness, or what he calls "experiments," that produce our reality.

Faber describes the ethics that emerges out of this character as a kind of "virtue ethics." Virtue ethics refers to an ethic that is built on the premise that virtue (or the characteristics of ethical behavior) cannot be a set standard and must be reasoned through in different ways

[250] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 171.
[251] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 172.
[252] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 165.

depending on the society in question. Thus, the character of what is ethical depends on the context it out of which it emerges. If we put these two ideas together, we get the sense that ethics in Whitehead emerges out of the multifaceted character of the universe and thus cannot have any universal ethical criteria, because that character may change depending on the context. This understanding of ethics as an emerging character of the cosmos informs Faber's notion of justice. Justice can address the "just character of 'living together,'" but it cannot be based on any "universal measure of criterion for any ethical categories, principles or codes."[253]

Out of all of this, Faber argues that "justice makes its appearance as an impulse that names how the world *may always anew become* 'cosmos' and that it can *only* become 'cosmos' by 'moulding the general flux in its broken progress towards finer, subtler issues.'"[254] By using this quote from *Science and the Modern World*, Faber is hinting at where an idea of justice can fit into Whitehead's wider scheme. "Moulding the general flux" refers to guiding the ever changing relations between the interdependent multiplicities that make up the ecological character of the universe, and this flux, being guided from "its broken progress" toward "finer, subtler issues," refers to a specific part of that character. There is a purposefulness in Whitehead's system that urges every occasion of experience toward higher intensities and harmonies, even in the face of tragic moments that thwart and fight against that purpose. Guiding the flux is that purposefulness and its "broken progress" refers to those tragic moments. But guiding these moments toward "finer" and "subtler" issues refers to the transformations that can occur in those moments by incorporating such tragedy into something new. Thus, justice makes "its appearance" out of this specific "impulse" toward the creation of something new, that is guided

[253] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 172.
[254] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 172.

by the purposefulness of the universe. Justice names this particular activity that basically emerges as the character of the cosmos.

This is why, when it comes to poietic justice, Faber quotes Whitehead when he explains that it "arises out of the very nature of things"[255] Poietic justice, like justice itself, emerges out of the character of the universe. In explaining further, Faber describes poietic justice as "a championship that 'transmutes what has been lost into a living fact,' that offers a 'mirror which' – in light of its downfalls – 'discloses to every creature its own greatness'"[256] This means that poietic justice, as a part of the character of the universe, works to vigorously support the change in nature of what has been lost in experience. When the facts of our existence push against our ability to progress toward higher harmonies, poietic justice supports the activity of changing the nature of that negative push. That support manifests as a nurturing factor that promotes the best possibility of what every occasion could be, in spite of the loss suffered.

At this point, Faber asks the all-important question regarding justice in Whitehead. How do we "*imitate* justice that does not look for a Law to satisfy, for injustices to be restored, or good to be distributed equally, but that *in any instance* of never ending experimentation calls to uncover a *poietic* 'character' in which the 'Universe is about Universe.'"[257] All of this is a uniquely powerful understanding of justice, but in the end, what does it mean for us? How do we participate in a justice that is not based on notions of law or equity? How do we participate in something that is simply part of the character of the universe itself?

[255] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.
[256] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 173.
[257] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 173.

As an answer, Faber offers that "*poietic* justice is neither primarily a legal nor an ethical matter, but the *art* of 'living together.' It *expresses* the 'characteristic' of ecological civilization . . . *in light of the multiplicities it excludes*."[258] As further explanation, Faber offers that "justice *becomes* justice *in the face of the place of its breakdown*, and it becomes *poietic justice* in the *'imitation' of its messianic character in the moments of urgency* that always call for a *transformation* of the violence of exclusion into 'concrescence' or – 'living together.'"[259] Putting these two quotes together paints a detailed picture of how poietic justice fits into Whitehead's ecological character. First, justice is only apparent or needed in the face of injustice, or when justice begins to break down. But it becomes poietic justice in the call for transformation of the violence of exclusion that inevitably comes with "living together." In the process of the becoming of our civilization, something must always be left behind. Sometimes, in the harshness of our reality, tragedy is the result and the thing left behind is the "better world that might have been." In those moments, we are faced with the "violence of exclusion" which is a natural part of the process of becoming in this world of "living together," or this world of ever becoming multiplicity that never unifies into a totality. Thus, poietic justice is that call, not to deny the reality of the violence, but to be transformed by its reality into something better. This transformation emerges out of the "mirror" Faber referred to that, in spite of such violence, can show the best change that can be created in the face of such violence. This is why Faber says that poietic justice is the "'imitation' of its messianic character." Poietic justice is that possibility for good or positive things to emerge from the transformation of the violence inherent in our universe.

[258] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 174.
[259] Faber, "Theopoetic Justice," 174.

Now we can understand why Faber calls poietic justice the "*art* of 'living together.'" If we can imitate this justice, then we can find our way in how to participate in this activity. If we imitate this character, justice for us does not come from a set of universal codes or principles. Instead, it means that we can apply our creativity and imagination (as the basis of "art") to the transformations that can occur in the face of tragedy. This "art" emerges out of our participation in the activity of transforming the tragedy of our world to "finer, subtler issues."

Faber's justice is an elegant solution to how the idea of justice can fit into Whitehead's metaphysical scheme. But an issue arises when this is compared the Jewish perspective of justice and the role of humanity. In regard to justice, the Jewish perspective (especially the prophetic) is largely built around Deuteronomy 16:20, "Justice, justice shall you pursue."[260] This line is usually interpreted to mean justice as a demand for every individual. It is a demand that exists procedurally so that "in the courts we ensure fairness," but also exists substantively "in society generally."[261] Thus, justice is a call to action, to actively seek out and engage society in the pursuit of justice and the betterment of society.

This call to actively engage goes to the very heart of the role humanity plays in creation itself. As Heschel explains, God's "greater masterpiece" is "still undone" and "still in the process of being created." Most importantly, "for accomplishing His grand design, God needs the help of man."[262] The actions of humanity are necessary in the ongoing work of God. Justice as seeking out and engaging society to improve it is how humanity accomplishes this. As Heschel

[260] Deuteronomy 16:20 (New Revised Standard Version)
[261] Elliot Dorff, *The Jewish Approach to Repairing the World: A Brief Introduction for Christians* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008), 4.
[262] Heschel, *Prophets*, 198.

puts it, "Life is clay, and righteousness [is] the mold in which God wants history to be shaped."[263]

From this perceptive, as elegant is Faber's notion of Justice is, there may be an issue of translating that into Jewish understanding. It may not be enough to speak to the Jewish perspective of justice and the role of humanity in the world. This is especially true of the prophetic. The prophets did not get their disturbing label by being elegant. Their perspective was not one of elegance, but confrontation. For this reason, looking for justice in Whitehead requires a more confrontational tone with a heightened sense of human involvement in bringing it about.

Participating in the character of the universe by calling for transformation does not do enough to highlight the necessary elements for the prophetic. To "call on" transformation does denote a certain level of human participation, but is that enough to speak to the prophetic need to actively participate in creating the need for the transformation in the first place? It is not that Faber's notion of justice is passive per se, but it is not active enough to fulfill the needs of "Justice, justice, shall you pursue." The prophetic needs a confrontational understanding of justice, and one where humanity is included in the activity of bringing it about. A confrontational understanding of justice is inherent in Heschel's description of justice as an ongoing challenge, and a mode of action. If we are going to achieve Heschel's vision of justice, we are going to need a new interpretation of justice in Whitehead's system.

[263] Heschel, *Prophets*, 198.

Justice as Deconstruction – Derrida's Perspective

To better understand how this challenge and mode of action could be found in Whitehead, I turn to Jacques Derrida and his explanation of deconstruction and justice. Like justice, the notion of deconstruction put forth by Jacques Derrida is also difficult to talk about. This is due, in no small part, to the fact that his notion of deconstruction is (quite frankly) very difficult to even think about. Basically, Derrida is asking us to do the impossible. "Deconstruction is the relentless pursuit of the impossible, which means, of things whose possibility is sustained by their impossibility, of things which, instead of being wiped out by their impossibility, are actually nourished and fed by it."[264] It is the impossible that makes the possible, well, possible.

Deconstruction only makes sense if we understand its opposite – construction. The perspective of deconstruction understands that everything about us has been constructed by us. There is nothing beyond what we have constructed for ourselves. Every truth, idea, or norm is a human construct. Our reality is the result of everything we put into it in order to make it work for our particular time and place. For this reason, deconstruction challenges all the structures that hold up our reality. In challenging these structures, deconstruction questions society itself. In seeing those structures as constructs, the task of deconstruction is to dismantle them. Only by doing this can we take a better look at these structures. Since everything we do is a construction, deconstruction never ends.

The goal of deconstruction is not to destroy, but to constantly create. By dismantling our norms and standards, we put ourselves in the position of constant reinvention and improvement.

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[264] John Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997),32.

Only by breaking our norms down can we see the cracks (flaws) in them. Once we see them, we can improve upon them. Furthermore, with the understanding that no construction could be perfect, we must also understand that no improvement can be permanent. Thus, each new improvement must be deconstructed for a new reinvention and so on.

This is the real reason why deconstruction is said to never end. Deconstruction and construction must be understood to be in a constant state of flux with each other. We have to think of deconstruction and construction as two sides of the same coin (or maybe yin and yang would be a better analogy). The process of deconstruction and construction is never-ending, and both are going on all at the same time.

This is also why deconstruction implies doing the impossible. By being something that is in constant flux, it becomes something that you can never really identify or put your finger on. We cannot even say that this flux is a "thing" at all. It describes something that is beyond our language – which is why it is so hard to talk about. Several terms have been used to designate this space that has no location. Whether Derrida uses his idea of *différance* or Plato's idea of *khôra* to explain this space, it all boils down to the impossible task of describing this area of flux that lies in between deconstruction and construction.

As with most things involving deconstruction, *différance* is difficult to talk about. The problem lies in language itself. All language has limits, simply because there are things that language cannot do. Language cannot go beyond itself. At its core, language can be seen as a system of meanings connected to meaningless symbols. The concept of *différance* not only goes beyond this, but illustrates it. I say "concept" only because that is what our language uses to identify it, but in fact, this is also incorrect. Derrida states that "*différance* is literally neither a

word nor a concept."[265] *Différance* cannot be a "word" or a "concept" because these are monikers of language. Thus we (like Derrida) are stuck attempting to convey something in language that language cannot convey. This is one of the reasons he came up with the word "*différance*." He needs to use a word that does not exist because he is talking about something that does not "exist."

Since *différance* is technically impossible to talk about, Derrida uses other ideas to illustrate it, or at least attempt to get a sense of it. Ironically, the analogy Derrida uses to best describe *différance* is language itself. For his analogy, Derrida turned to the work of the Swiss linguist and semiotician Saussure. Derrida states that, for Saussure, "the elements of signification function due not to the compact force of their nuclei but rather to the network of opposites that distinguishes them, and then relates them one to another."[266] From Saussure's point of view, words (as signs) have no meaning in and of themselves. Meaning becomes understood only through the system created by the people who use those words. Words can only be understood by how they differ from each other. Thus the "elements" (words) that make up a language have no "force" (meaning) in themselves, but are rather a "network of opposites" (distinguished only by differences). In an effort to make this more clear, let us try an example: change the letter "a" in "cat" to an "o". Now we have "cot," which has a very different meaning from "cat." The force of meaning of "cat" or "cot" does not come from the words themselves. It comes only from the users of the language who have applied different meanings to "cat" and

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[265] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3.

[266] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 10.

"cot." More importantly, the only way to know the difference between "cat" and "cot" is to recognize the difference in the words themselves.[267]

It must be remembered that Saussure is only being used to get a better understanding of *différance*. The key is to focus on the tensions between the differences that create meaning in language. By focusing on this tension, we start to comprehend what *différance* is. Derrida states that "[r]etaining at least the framework, if not the content, of this requirement formulated by Saussure, we will designate as *différance* the movement according to which language, or any code, any system of referral in general is constituted 'historically' as a weave of differences."[268] The focus here must be on the word "movement." *Différance* is the *movement* between differences that constitute reality as a weave that holds these differences together. To better understand *différance* then, we have to understand this movement.

Derrida attempts to explain this movement by introducing the idea of "play." Derrida uses the term "play" seriously. "Essentially and lawfully, every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. Such a play, *différance*, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general."[269] The "play of differences" refers to the relation or tension, the movement back and forth, the oscillation to and fro that creates systems of meaning. This play is the realization that all understanding emerges through differences attempting to limit each other. Out of this play of emerges concepts and meaning. This means that *différance* is that "space" that allows concepts and meaning to emerge

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[267] Derrida performs a similar word play at the beginning of his lecture on *différance* by illustrating the effect of changing the "e" in difference to an "a" to make *différance*. As usual, Derrida is illustrating his ideas in the very presentations of them.

[268] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 12.

[269] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 11.

in the first place. As Derrida puts it, it allows for the "possibility of conceptuality." It is the situation through which meaning becomes possible.

Derrida goes on to say that "What is written as *différance*, then, will be the playing movement that "produces" – by means of something that is not simply an activity – these differences, these effects of difference."[270] This is why *différance* can be seen as both passive and active. It's not actually "doing" anything, but it does allow for something to happen. It's not that *différance* is created by differences; it is the receptacle that allows differences to be created and the "play" to happen. Thus, it is that which allows for concepts and meaning to come about.

As the play of differences, *différance* becomes the focus and drive behind the project of deconstruction. "Thus, *différance* is the name we might give to the 'active,' moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces, that Nietzsche sets up against the entire system of metaphysical grammar, wherever this system governs culture, philosophy, and science."[271] If every system (language, code, standard, culture, philosophy, science) emerges out of the play of differences, then the meanings of such things are "constructed" by those who place meaning on them. Using again the example of language, what emerges has no meaning in and of itself; the meaning is placed on it. This means that there is no foundation of meaning, there is only this play of difference. Thus, at its core, all meaning is constructed.

In the end, Derrida is asking us to exist in the "in between" of things. He is asking us to exist in the cracks of what we take for granted. When it comes to laws, norms and standards, we must constantly explore the cracks "in between" what we think we know and what is possible. This "in between" is, however, impossible since it cannot truly "exist." It is this "in between"

[270] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 11.
[271] Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 15.

space that allows for reinvention to happen. Thus, by doing the impossible (staying in the "in between" spaces) reinvention and improvement become possible.

In a lecture given at the Cardozo Law School, Derrida applied deconstruction to the idea of justice.[272] To make his point, Derrida illuminated the difference between law and justice. "Law is not justice. Law is the element of calculation, and it is just that there be law, but justice is incalculable, it demands that one calculate with the incalculable; and aporetic experiences are the experiences, as improbable as they are necessary, of justice, that is to say of moments in which the decision between just and unjust is never insured by a rule."[273] For Derrida, law is something that can be deconstructed, while justice is not. Justice is not only what cannot be calculated, it is also the demand that we must calculate with it (even though we can never calculate it). Moreover, whatever decision is made about the incalculable calculation can never by insured by a rule or law (the very thing that can be calculated).

In another lecture, Derrida attempted to further explain this idea by stating that "there is a history of legal systems, of rights, of laws, of positive laws, and this history is a history of the transformation of laws. That's why they are there. You can improve law, you can replace one law by another one. They are constitutions and institutions. This is a history, and a history, as such, can be deconstructed."[274] Derrida recognized that laws are strictly a human construct. They are an attempt to institute what is considered right for that particular time and place. But times and places change. For this reason, all legal systems have a history and an evolution.

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[272] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 230 -298.

[273] Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 244.

[274] Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*,16.

As Derrida points out, it is for this very reason than justice cannot be the law. As a construct, law needs to be deconstructed. Deconstruction, however, does not mean destruction. To deconstruct the law means that it must be broken down to see where reinvention and improvement fit in. It is here that the idea of justice emerges. "Justice is what gives us the impulse, the drive, or the movement to improve the law, that is, to deconstruct the law."[275] Because construction is a vital part of the deconstruction process, it provides the reason why we deconstruct in the first place. Derrida takes this "reason" for deconstruction and calls it justice. This is why he goes on to state (quite boldly) that "Deconstruction is justice."[276] It is justice because it is what drives us to improve the law. In this way, justice is also incalculable because (as deconstruction) it operates in the tensions of legal systems. Justice is that area of constant flux and tension that can never be truly identified, but is always necessary. This is why, according to Derrida, we must calculate with the incalculable. Only by doing so can we move forward.

This understanding of justice is, in fact, what it means to be prophetic. In doing what the prophets did, they fit Derrida's description of justice. According to Heschel, "The fact that filled the prophets with dismay was not the absence of adequate laws, but the absence of righteousness. Judges were active in the land, but their judgments were devoid of righteousness."[277] Righteousness is defined as the quality or state of being just.[278] So, it was not simply the law the prophets were going after; it was the lack of justice as well. This means that the prophets also made a distinction between law and justice. The law itself did not guarantee justice. Thus, by

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[275] Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 16.
[276] Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 243.
[277] Heschel, *Prophets*, 202.
[278] Merrian-Webster Dictionary, s.v., accessed December 10th, 2018. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/righteousness

challenging the standards behind the laws, the prophets performed justice as defined by Derrida. By demanding a reinterpretation of law, the prophets threw themselves into the tension between what the law was and what it could be. In being prophets, they were doing the impossible, calculating the incalculable. They were being just.

In his lecture at Cardozo, Derrida uses a court judge as an example of how this idea of justice plays out in real life. "To be just, the decision of a judge, for example, must not only follow a rule of law or general law but must also assume it, approve it, confirm its value, by a reinstituting act of interpretation, as if, at the limit, the law did not exist previously – as if the judge himself invented it in each case. Each exercises of justice as law can be just only if it is a 'fresh judgment'"[279] In the moment of judgment, the judge is putting himself in that "in between" space of deconstruction. Thus, the judge is exhibiting justice. But we must keep in mind that the reinvention of the law is never arbitrary and cannot exist by itself. It must also exist within the structure of the existing law. Derrida goes on to say that "this new freshness, the initiality of this inaugural judgment can very well – better yet, must very well – conform to a preexisting law, but the reinstituting, reinventive and freely deciding interpretation of the responsible judge required that his 'justice' not consist only in conformity."[280] This example illustrates the tension and relation that exists between law and justice, which then also illustrates the tension and relation that exists in deconstruction. The tension and relation come from the fact that we must dismantle current legal systems on the one hand, but we cannot simply throw out the system on the other. The dismantling has to be there to identify the limitations of the system, but the system must remain or there can be no reconstruction. In order for reinvention to

[279] Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 251.
[280] Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 251.

happen, both must be there. Thus, the judge must exist in the ever-fluxing "in between" space that both is and is not. The judge must calculate the incalculable. The judge is truly deconstructing the law and thus justice emerges. To deconstruct is to do justice.

For Derrida, the judge can only do justice by staying in the "in between" space between deconstruction and construction of the law. In looking at what the prophets were doing, it could be said that every prophet acted as a judge in exactly this manner. Heschel states that the prophets "were not concerned with the definition, but the predicament, of justice."[281] The prophets did not concern themselves with the definition of what justice was supposed to be; they were simply concerned with doing justice. Like Derrida's judge, the prophets had to exist within the structures of their day, but to do justice they could not be defined by them. They, too, had to exist in the "in between" spaces. The prophets also had to hold the impossible line between breaking down the unjust structures and having to maintain them. They had to constantly reinvent the law by holding deconstruction and construction together at the same time.

Heschel went on to explain that "prophecy is not simply the application of timeless standards to particular human situations, but rather an interpretation of a particular moment in history."[282] The true perspective of the prophets was one of correction. They witnessed the injustice of their time and sought to correct it. Their ultimate goal was to reinterpret and improve their situation. In doing this, the prophets focused their energies on the places where correction was most necessary – the structures that created the injustice in the first place. This is what brought Heschel to conclude that "the major activity of the prophets was *interference*, remonstrating about wrongs inflicted on other people, meddling in affairs which were seemingly

[281] Heschel, *Prophets*, 204.
[282] Heschel, *Prophets*, xvii.

neither their concern nor their responsibility."[283] Heschel understood that, to change the structures of their world, the prophets had to confront and break down those structures so they could be reinterpreted through the lens of justice.

Finding Justice in Whitehead

A type of "in-between" space also exists in Whitehead's system. As we explored in Chapter Two, every level of experience progresses out of the tension created by contrasts. This coincides with Derrida's understanding of the play of differences that determine understanding and creates the "in-between" space between deconstruction and construction. In Whitehead, experience emerges out of the play of contrasts. The tension created by this constant play of contrasts creates an "in-between" space that is absolutely necessary for reinvention and improvement.

As we know, contained within Whitehead's philosophy is the constant push toward higher intensities and stronger beauty. With this understanding, Whitehead states that "the introduction of contrast is obtained by the differences, or reversions, in some elements of the complex data. . . The reversion is due to the aim at complexity as one condition for intensity."[284] Thus, contrast is necessary for intensity as an outcome of complexity. Higher intensity and complexity emerge out of the play of "differences" that exists within the system itself. In this case the "differences" are contrasts. Contrasts are defined by being "strikingly different," and the play between those differences is what defines the progression of experiences

[283] Heschel, *Prophets*, 205.
[284] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22.

in Whitehead.[285] As the basis of his system, this intensity that arises out of the play of contrasts becomes a part of every relation. It is simply a matter of what level of play exists for each particular relation. The more complex the play is, the more intense the relation becomes, and the higher the level of experience that can be achieved.

This play of contrasts exists at every level. At the level of actual occasions of experience there is a play of contrasts between positive and negative prehensions. Intensity of experience arises out of the ability to hold contrasts together without discarding them. This play of contrasts creates a tension that allows for a progression of experience and eventually constitutes value or beauty in the experience.

More complex societies emerge out of a play of contrasts between order and disorder. Different levels of societies come together and form structures by which more complex societies can emerge. With disruptive elements being constantly introduced into different systems of order, each of those systems has the potential to evolve into more complex societies. With more complex societies, more contrasts can be held together. Thus, more complex harmonies can be found which lead to more complex levels of experience. This creates the never-ending potential for higher levels of experience. As Whitehead stated, "the right chaos, and the right vagueness are jointly required for any effective harmony."[286] This means that, through the right kind of tension (or play) between order and disorder, progress toward stronger beauty is made.

This play of contrasts is also on full display in Whitehead's understanding of harmony and discord. Every entity, society, or nexus is "devoted to such a disposition of emphasis as to

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[285] Merrian-Webster Dictionary, s.v., accessed March 5th, 2019. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contrast

[286] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 112.

maximize the integral intensity derivable from the most favourable balance."[287] This "favourable balance" is understood as a particular Harmony. Higher forms of order only emerge when a particular level is able to hold the balance (or Harmony) and thus make it possible to incorporate a higher level of intensity and experience. Thus, this notion of Harmony (or balance) is necessary to maintain greater complexity in the universe.

But any movement toward this greater complexity in the universe can only happen when the balance of harmony is disrupted. Harmony on its own will inevitably lead to stagnation and repetition. Once an ordered society is able to maintain a level of harmony, all it can do is maintain it. Although this maintenance is vitally important, that harmony cannot, by itself, grow beyond it. In order for a society to grow, reinvent, and improve, that harmony must be disrupted. It must be broken down to some degree so that a new, more complex harmony can be found. Therefore, discord (as an element of disruption) must be introduced through the appearance of novelty and is necessary to break such repetition and open the possibility for higher levels of experience. Again, the tension is clear and only through the play between harmony and discord can the progression toward higher beauty be made.

Underlying all of this is the ever-shifting multiplicity of the universe. If we were able to pan back and see the full picture of the universe, what starts with the satisfaction of one individual occasion of experience becomes an entire universe of multiplicity. In panning back from the single occasion, we can begin to see the larger society, then the systems of societies, to the nexus, and to the systems of nexus. The full picture is that of a vast universe of constant flux, filled with innumerable satisfactions going on at innumerable levels. There is no ultimate

[287] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 278.

satisfaction of the universe. It remains a constant, vast, and indescribable flux of individual elements in a never-ending state of innumerable tensions. But even that understanding isn't enough. As Whitehead states, "In the inescapable flux, there is something that abides; in the overwhelming permanence, there is an element that escapes into flux. Permanence can be snatched only out of flux; and the passing moment can find its adequate intensity only by its submission to permanence."[288] Even the flux itself has tension to it. Within the multiplicity is the constant fundamental tension between permanence and change itself.

Derrida focused on the differences necessary to make things known. We can only tell things apart because of their difference. Thus, if we understand that everything is made up of the play of differences, then we can understand that everything can be deconstructed by examining those differences. In examining the play of differences in between things, we find an indescribable "in-between" place of constant breaking down and creating that could be understood as justice. Justice is that place of constant flux because it maintains the possibility for constant change and improvement. Justice is what gives us the drive to confront and improve in the first place. This is why Derrida encourages us to exist in the "in-between" of things. Only there can justice emerge.

Where does an ever-changing universe aiming at beauty leave us when attempting to understand how justice could work in such a system? With Derrida, what we can know emerges out of a play of differences. With Whitehead, our very existence emerges out of a play of contrasts. He explained that "the art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order."[289] This preserving "order amid change" and "change amid order"

[288] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 338.
[289] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 339.

is the never-ending building up and breaking down of our reality. Progress can only be maintained by the building up and breaking down of every system, only to be built back up again. This is a system that fights against stagnation. As Whitehead stated, "Change is required to sustain a maximum of beauty."[290] A static universe is a dead one. Thus, such stagnation must be confronted and disrupted. Only through that disruption is the hope of improvement possible. With disruption comes the breaking down of a system and the possibility of building it back up into something new. Justice exists in the drive and impulse to disrupt harmonies, and that disruption happens if we purposefully seek out and exist in the "in-between" of the contrasts that create them.

This means justice could not be a fixed standard or norm. There can be no universal rules of justice in this system. As soon as a universal claim is made, any attempt to hold on to it would end in a static, dead system. The difference between law and justice is a perfect example of this. If the never-ending building up and breaking down of the system is a necessity, then an understanding of justice must be able to operate in an ever-changing world. As with Derrida's understanding of justice as deconstruction, if we focus on the tensions that exist in between things, we find an indescribable "in-between" space of constant breaking down and creating that could be understood as justice. In this way, justice in Whitehead is that place of constant flux because it maintains the possibility for constant change and improvement.

This activity of seeking out and existing in the "in-between" space created by contrasts is what the prophet does. The prophetic role of interference fits into Whitehead's system as the embodiment of his concept of discord. We learned in Chapter Two that "the intensity of

[290] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 59.

satisfaction is promoted by 'order' in the phases from which concrescence arises and through which it passes; it is enfeebled by the 'disorder.'"[291] If order is needed to sustain a system that can support more complex societies, then disorder breaks down that supporting system. The disruption of a system in order to start breaking it down is a necessary component of justice. The enfeeblement that comes out of that disruption is the effect of discord. Only when this happens are more complexity and higher levels of intensity possible.

Understood in this way, in can be said that the discord opens up the possibility for change and improvement. The role of the prophet, as one who confronts and interferes, is the element of discord in our social systems. By seeking out and existing in the "in-between" spaces in society, the prophet participates in justice by being the discordant element that creates disruption. By doing so, the prophet becomes an agent of change. This is a risk because that change could end up either negative or positive. Either way, the possibility for change cannot exist without some form of disruption.

The breakdown of order through discord may initially be negative, but without it there would be stagnation and no possibility for higher levels of intensity. Incorporation of any disruptive element by a system means finding a new harmony or new way of maintaining order. If the element was successfully incorporated into the ordered society then a new more complex order could be maintained. The result would be the growth of that society into an increasingly complex ordered society, which in turn creates the potential for higher levels of experience and greater beauty. This is the essence of transformation. The goal of the prophet is not to simply disrupt and destroy. The entire point of interference and disruption is to allow for the creation of

[291]Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 84.

something better. When the prophets interfered and disrupted the power structures of their day, it was not to leave them in shambles. The purpose was to allow for the creation of a new structure that would not leave the widow and orphan behind. The prophets were seeking the transformation of society. The activity of seeking out and allowing for transformation is justice.

The true perspective of the prophets is better understood as one of correction through disruption. The prophets were the disrupting agents that purposely sought to interfere and break down the unjust structures of their time. As sources of disruption, they acted as the novel elements in society that created discord. By going after their current systems, the prophets acted as agents of change. By disrupting the system, they opened up the possibility for transformation. This brings us to the core of the prophetic – justice as interference, or perhaps justice through interference. In order to seek justice, a space must be opened in which change and transformation can occur.

Understood in this way, justice is the impulse and purpose to participate in the act of disruption. To confront is justice. Through confrontation, justice is the discordant element that creates a space in which change and improvement can happen. Those who seek justice prompt change. We become active agents in opening up the possibly for correction. In this way, justice is better understood as an activity. It is the "doing" that makes change and improvement possible in the first place. This is how justice opens up the future. It is a constant drive for change that emerges out of a system that never stops changing. Therefore, justice is not a thing; it is better understood as a mode of action, without which no change or improvement could happen.

Obligation

As with justice, Whitehead did not do much exploration into the concept of moral obligation. Also, as with justice, it was up to those who came after to see if such moral concepts could be extracted from Whitehead's foundations. In his systemizing of Whitehead's moral philosophy, Brian Henning offered the most concise explanation of how obligation could work in Whitehead. He argued that an ethical obligation was inherent in Whitehead's understanding of morality.

Henning began his argument with a quote from *Science and the Modern World*. He said that "[i]f the very fact of being an individual introduces 'the element of value, of being valuable, of being an end in itself, of being something which is for its own sake,' then every individual lays an obligation on us (moral agents) to take it into account."[292] From this, we get the sense that Henning is extracting obligation from the existence of value in Whitehead's system. This is important for Henning because, if every individual in Whitehead's system has value at some level, then morality (as well as our obligation to it) would apply to every individual in existence. This emerges out of Henning's attempt to systematize Whitehead's moral philosophy.

As we discussed previously, by essentially equating importance, beauty, and value and then applying that to Whitehead's notion of morality, Henning concludes that any action that moves toward higher importance, beauty, and value is understood as moral. Also, since every actual thing in existence has value at some level, then every relation can be understood as moral on some level as well. Henning's understanding of ethical obligation follows the same pattern.

[292] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 145.

Since value itself lays a claim of obligation, and every actual thing in Whitehead's system has value, then we are continually ethically obligated.

Henning turns to William James to make this point. James pointed out that "there is some obligation whenever there is a claim," and that "claims are, in fact, coextensive terms; they cover each other exactly."[293] Although Henning recognizes that James was referring only to humans at the time, he argues that James did expand this idea later. This is important because Henning uses this to argue that this notion of claim and obligation extends to "every individual."[294] In Whitehead's system, "every individual" refers to all actual things in existence. Thus, as moral agents, we are morally obligated to every aspect of our world, not just humanity.

When it comes to obligation, my issue with Henning is not in the relation between claim and obligation. Using James' argument that claim and obligation are essentially the same is logically sound.[295] If a claim exists, then one can argue that an obligation to meet it exists as well. My issue with Henning is whether a moral claim exists in Whitehead's notion of morality in the first place. Why would value for an individual automatically lay any kind of moral claim? Why would a "should" or "ought" exist, simply because something is seen as valuable?

Henning's explanation is ambiguous at best. He implements has notion of obligation in his "Five Interrelated Obligations," which are all based upon the first obligation. Henning states that the first obligation is "always to act in such a way as to bring about the greatest possible universe of beauty, value, and importance that in each situation is possible," and that this obligation "captures most fully the heart of the ethics of creativity."[296] I myself have argued that

[293] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 217.
[294] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 217.
[295] As we will see later, Heschel makes a similar assertion.
[296] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 146.

the action he is describing can be understood as moral. But what about moral action, defined in this way, automatically necessitates it as an obligation?

In attempting an explanation as to why this is an actual obligation, Henning explains that "the obligation to maximize beauty is not only the aim of morality, it is the ideal and aim of process itself." Thus, "[t]his obligation . . . follows directly from the interpretation of actuality as a teleological process oriented toward the achievement of beauty, value, and importance for the self, the other, and for the whole."[297] At this point, Henning offers no further explanation in the text as to why this must be understood as an obligation. He does, however, offer an endnote. In the endnote, Henning uses a quote from Whitehead about ideals. He states that,

> It is in this context that I understand Whitehead's claim that 'there are experiences of ideals – of ideals entertained, of ideals aimed at, of ideals achieved, of ideals defaced. . . We are essentially measuring ourselves in respect to what we are not. A solipsist experience cannot succeed or fail, for it would be all that exists. There would be no standard of comparison. Human experience explicitly relates itself to an external standard. The universe is thus understood as including a source of ideals.'[298]

The problem is that Henning ends the endnote here. There is no further explanation after the Whitehead quote. Back in the text he simply says, "given such a worldview," his first obligation stands. With no real explanation, we are left to our own devices to figure out how all of this adds up to a moral obligation.

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[297] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 146.
[298] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 218.

In looking at what Henning has, we can observe that the obligation itself is a moral one. To act "as to bring out the greatest universe of beauty, value, and importance that in each situation is possible" coincides with what I have extracted as moral understanding and moral action in Whitehead. So, the question then becomes, with what Henning has given us, how can this understanding of morality be understood as an obligation?

It is obvious that Henning's sense of obligation is tied to Whitehead's notion of teleology and ideals, but how and why goes unexplained. Between what he has in the text and what he has in the endnote, we can easily identify those two components: first, that this obligation follows directly from the teleology in Whitehead to maximize beauty, and second, in this teleological context, we experience ideals. So, what do we get when we put these two together? We can interpret Henning as saying there is a teleology toward the ideal of maximizing beauty. But he can also be arguing that, because we experience ideals, there exists the teleology to maximize beauty. Either way, the result is the same. Henning seems to be implying that, if we have an ideal, then there is a teleology implied to achieve it. But what is it about this implication that necessitates an obligation?

No matter how Henning is interpreted, it still does not answer the question – what is it about Whitehead's teleology and/or ideals that would lead us to the conclusion that we are morally obligated to do anything? Henning never explicitly connects the relation between the two. Without that connection, we are left with the unexplained assumption that, somehow, value automatically means a claim of obligation.

Henning’s analysis demonstrates the difficulty of finding an ethical obligation in Whitehead and presents the limits of Whitehead’s moral philosophy. By basing his system on aesthetics, Whitehead (as currently interpreted) did not set forth a foundational ethic that could

hold up an ethical obligation. There is a reason Henning could only get so far with current interpretations of Whitehead's system.

This also presents a real problem for our project. We have found that Whitehead can be interpreted to include Heschel's understanding of moral action and justice. But it does not appear that Whitehead, as currently understood, can be interpreted to include Heschel's notion of ethical obligation. This being the case, if we want to meet the all of the criteria of Heschel's prophetic vision, we need a new interpretation of ethics and morality in Whitehead. If we have reached the limits of what we can do with Whitehead's morality, then a new interpretation is necessary if we are to reach our goal of finding a Process Prophetic.

Chapter 4 – Transforming Morality in Whitehead

In the last chapter, we discovered that a prophetic interpretation was possible in Whitehead, up to a point. With what we can glean from morality in Whitehead, we can find an interpretation that can encompass Heschel's criteria of moral action and justice. We found a problem, however, when attempting to find an interpretation that could incorporate a moral obligation. For this chapter, we will dive deeper into Whitehead's system to see if a new interpretation of Whitehead's morality can be found. In doing so, not only will we be able to meet Heschel's final criterion, but we may also discover that Whitehead's process-relational system contains an actual prophetic nature.

A new understanding of Whitehead's morality can be extracted from a quote found in *Modes of Thought*: "Morality consists in the control of process so as to maximize importance."[299] This statement is significant because, not only does it encompass all the key concepts necessary to build a moral system in Whitehead, it also allows for the existence of an ethical obligation. Out of this statement we see three main areas of investigation: importance, process, and the control of that process. All three concepts are complex and difficult to define. By exploring each one, however, we will find how they come together to form the basis of ethical thinking in Whitehead.

When it comes to the term process, we tacked that in detail in Chapter Two. We explored how the intricacies of process in Whitehead lays the foundation of his entire system. Whitehead based his metaphysics on aesthetics, or beauty. Thus, the process in his system focuses on the creation of beauty/value through tensions and contrasts. At every level of

[299] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 13.

existence there are societies of actual occasions that exist in constant tension of order and disorder, harmony and discord. Order is necessary to maintain higher harmonies and thus higher intensities. But once that harmony is achieved, the possibility of stagnation arises. There is no growth unless a novel element is introduced into the existing order to cause a disruption at some level. If this disruptive element can be incorporated, then more contrast is created, and higher intensities achieved. Through this never-ending process, higher intensities through higher harmonies are maintained. With these higher intensities come higher or stronger beauty, which then translates into more value. When Whitehead states that morality consists in the "control of process," this is the process he is referring to.

Whitehead's concept of importance was discussed in Chapter Three. We were able to define importance and explore what it meant for Whitehead's system. As we discussed, nailing down the definition of importance was no easy task. But if we attempted to sum up the goal of Whitehead's metaphysical system, all signs pointed to his understanding of importance. In the end, importance is the unity of purpose that can be understood as the culminating reason or motivation of an action toward achieving the highest level of intensity. As the ideal purposefulness in the system, it is that which seeks the highest levels of intensity. This means that importance refers to the motivation of the universe to achieve higher intensities, and thus higher levels of experience. Going back to the quote from *Modes of Thought*, "maximizing importance" would then encompass the goal of maximizing higher harmonies and greater contrasts that lead to greater levels of intensity. Finally, if Whitehead's concept of importance is purpose moving toward higher levels of experience, then it all culminates in a purpose moving toward the maximization of beauty and value.

With Whitehead placing morality in the "control of process so as to maximize importance," we now have a better understanding of what Whitehead is referring to when it comes to process and importance. He is talking about a relational system that is in constant process of creating and maintaining different levels of beauty or value, as well as the ideal purposefulness of pushing toward higher levels of beauty or value within the system. When it comes to morality then, we know it has to do with the creation of beauty and value and the ideal of how to obtain it. What is left is the "control of process" and how that ties everything together to create Whitehead's understanding of morality. For that, we must first talk about what teleology looks like for Whitehead.

Role of Whitehead's Teleology

From our discussion of importance we can conclude that, although Whitehead's system is never-ending, this does not mean it is a system without an "end." There may be no "end" (as in stopping point) in Whitehead's system, but there is an "end" (as in goal) in his system. This brings us to a different understanding of teleology. Just because an actual end (stopping point) may not exist, that does not eliminate the goal of reaching it. In this way, we can understand Whitehead's system as having an "end without an ending."

What does this do for the drive to meet that indeterminable end? Can there be an aim toward something that can't actually exist? The answer is yes, but it means that another slight shift in perspective is required. If we stop striving toward an end, the result is no movement at all. To stop means stagnation. To move forward means moving toward an end, regardless of whether that end or goal can be reached. Thus, the aim becomes the movement itself. In order

for this movement to happen, we need the aim directed toward a goal. If that goal can never be reached, then the aim toward it never stops. It's all a part of the process (which means it's all a part of existence).

The aim can no longer be focused on the end (as a fixed result), but must instead be focused on something within the process itself. If the goal is contained within the process, then the aim is to continue the process itself. In doing so, it becomes a necessary part of the system. Without the goal, "nothing of significance is ever realized."[300] But without the aim (or drive) to reach it, we don't go anywhere. The relation between goal and aim is perpetual. This means an "aim" does exist within Whitehead's system, but it's an aim that can never be fulfilled. However, that does not remove it or the role it plays in creating purpose. That purpose becomes the progress of the system itself.

So, if the aim in Whitehead's system is aiming at a goal which creates the purpose and drive to reach it, what is the goal at which the system is aiming? Whitehead has stated that the "teleology of the universe is directed at the production of beauty."[301] We now know that teleology for Whitehead does not mean a fixed point, but rather a striving toward a never-ending goal. From this statement, we can now see that the goal the universe is striving for is the "production of beauty." If this is the case, then with what we have learned so far of Whitehead's system, the goal of the universe is in the production of higher value through increased complexity. Higher levels of experience, more intense harmonies, greatness of experience are all built on increased complexity through the tensions of contrasts, but they are also integral parts of the production of beauty. Thus, the production of beauty is integral to the process itself. The

[300] Schilpp, "Whitehead's Moral Philosophy," 574.
[301] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 265.

goal becomes the process and process becomes the goal. They cannot be separated. Thus, because the process never stops, neither does the goal of higher value (or stronger beauty).

This brings us back to importance, which we can now see is teleological in nature. If purpose becomes the maintaining of the system, and the goal of that system is the maximizing of importance (or value), then the purpose of the system becomes the maintenance of the maximization of value. This is why Whitehead's thinking is described as a philosophy of aesthetics or beauty. If our aim is to achieve higher value, then that creates a purpose to pursue the most beautiful.

Control of Process as Defining Element of Morality in Whitehead

I believe that having an aim that creates purpose sets up larger implications. Most notably, it sets up a very particular relationship – the relation between the future and the present. Specifically, it sets up a relationship in which the future can influence the present. I argue that this is where the "control" part of Whitehead's moral definition truly comes in. To have an aim automatically implies something in the future. Whatever you may be aiming at, to aim at it means you haven't reached it yet. The "yet" denotes a future event, and because of that aim, that future has influence on the present. The goal the aim is striving for creates a purpose in the present (to reach that goal). Out of that purpose comes a type of control. It affects decisions in the present that define the best way to reach the goal. As long as a purpose exists in relation to an aim, the future will always have influence on our control of the present through our decision-making.

Going back to Whitehead's original statement, morality comes into play in controlling the process to maximize importance. As the "control of process," morality is one of the elements that necessarily shapes the way we reach the ideal of maximizing importance. If the future creates the purpose that guides the control, then the future has an ethical influence on the present. Thus, the relation between the future and the present is moral in nature. The possible future may show us where we need to end up (higher value, stronger beauty), but we can only get there by controlling the process now. If this "control of process" is understood as morality (as defined by Whitehead), then the influence of the future has moral import. If moral judgments control the process, that control may be influenced by the future, but the control happens in the present. Whitehead can be understood as saying that "morals consist in the aim at the ideal" that is concerned with "effecting the future" by committing to ideals now.[302]

If morals consist in the aim at the ideal, the question arises – what is that ideal? Whitehead states that "morality does not indicate what you are to do in mythological abstraction. It does concern the general ideal which should be the justification of any particular objective."[303] This statement brings us to a slightly more narrowed down question – what is the general ideal? To answer this question, David Griffin turns to Whitehead's recognition that the teleology of the universe is the "production of beauty." This would indicate that the general ideal would involve the maximization of beauty. According the Griffin, although this is not incorrect, it is also not the whole story. He argues that the general ideal goes beyond maximizing beauty in every individual situation. He bases this argument in Whitehead's use of the "importance." As we explored earlier, importance for Whitehead has everything to do with seeking the stronger forms

[302] Schilpp, "Whitehead's Moral Philosophy," 574.
[303] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 14.

of beauty through higher (more intense) levels of experience. But when it comes to the general ideal, Griffin argues that Whitehead's use of the term importance "clearly does not identify morality with the aim to maximize aesthetic enjoyment" in the moment.[304] This comes from the dual understanding of importance. In speaking of the "general ideal" it clear that Whitehead is referring to the maximizing of the overall beauty of the universe. Although aesthetic enjoyment does play a role, morality is properly situated with maximizing beauty "in the most general sense."[305] Thus, by focusing on importance, we can understand the "general ideal" as not simply maximizing of beauty in every situation, but the maximizing of beauty of the universe as a whole.

Out of Whitehead's teleology there is an aim toward the goal/ideal of maximizing beauty and value. That aim creates a relation between the present and the future. The future affects the present by influencing our decisions now to reach that goal/ideal. This relation is a type of "control of process." The future goal/ideal influences our decisions in the present, and those decisions help control the process to reach the future goal/ideal of maximizing beauty/value. Thus, there is a moral relation between the future and the present. If morality consists in the control of process as to maximize importance, and maximizing importance refers to the ideal of maximizing beauty and value, then the future helps to control that process by influencing our decisions in the present to reach that ideal. This makes the relation between present and future moral in nature. The future has a moral impact on the present by influencing our moral actions now.

[304] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 305.
[305] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 305.

By understanding that the general ideal in Whitehead sets up a relation with the future that controls the process to obtain it in the present, we have a new understanding of morality in Whitehead. We now see that the future affects the present through the existence of the ideal of maximizing beauty and value. Thus, an action is moral if it works to control the process to reach the general ideal. This new understanding of morality in Whitehead now has the elements needed to meet the Heschel's criterion of moral obligation.

Obligation Revised

Heschel states that "the claim of one person to attain justice is contingent upon the assumption that there is another person who has the responsibility to answer it."[306] Thus, justice is an "interpersonal relationship, implying both a claim and a responsibility,"[307] which is why he believed justice to be, at its core, a relation that automatically implies a "transcendent demand."[308] This demand is the basis for his understanding of moral obligation. If we understand that the future has an ethical influence on the present, then we can incorporate Heschel's notion of claim and responsibility into Whitehead's moral philosophy to find a similar understanding of obligation.

If our drive and purpose in the present comes from the ideals of the future, then we can say that the future makes a "claim" that the present has a "responsibility" to answer. There is a basis for this in our new interpretation of Whitehead's morality. If "morals consist in the aim at the ideal," and the "aim at the ideal" refers to a possible future, then the future is demanding

[306] Heschel, *Prophets*, 268.
[307] Heschel, *Prophets*, 268.
[308] Heschel, *Prophets*, 268.

something of the present.[309] A commitment to the ideals in the present is the only way to achieve them in the future. This creates a "demand" for action. Controlling the process now in such a fashion as to produce an effect upon the future will "maximize importance" by "aiming at the greatness of experience."[310] In other words, the "aiming" at the greatness of experience creates an expectation of what Whitehead calls "conceptual realization."[311] He states that "the antecedent situation may demand depth of realization and a thin pattern may thwart conceptual expectation."[312] If we are aiming at maximizing importance, and morality is a "species of importance," then morality is wrapped up in this "demand" for conceptual realization.[313] That "demand" comes from a future realization that only actions now can fulfill. This is where moral obligation can be found in Whitehead's system. It is a system in which both ideals and action are necessary. Without ideals, nothing of significance is ever realized, and without action, those ideals can never be met. Thus, we are in a relationship with the future, and contained within that relationship is an obligation to be ethical. The future puts forth a claim that we have a responsibility to meet.

This is where Henning was lacking in his explanation of a moral obligation in Whitehead. He suggested that, if a moral claim is made, then that automatically sets up an obligation to answer it. Henning argued that such a claim exists within Whitehead's teleology and notion of ideals. But we were left to wonder how exactly that would work. If Henning could justify a moral claim in Whitehead's system, then he could argue for an obligation. But what is it about Whitehead's teleology and ideals that would lead us to the conclusion that a claim could possibly

[309] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 13.
[310] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 13-14.
[311] Schilpp, "Whitehead's Moral Philosophy," 441.
[312] Schilpp, "Whitehead's Moral Philosophy," 679.
[313] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 12.

exist? Without that, how are we morally obligated to do anything? What is interesting is that Henning has the necessary elements to come up with an explanation, but never explicitly connects the dots to justify it.

Through our new interpretation, we can now identify a moral claim within the moral philosophy of Whitehead. Henning was correct in where to find that claim – Whitehead's teleology and understanding of ideals. The question was simply how all of it comes together to produce a moral claim. We now understand that the ideals in the future, specifically the ideal to maximize importance, lays a claim on the present to meet those ideals. The future, then, creates a demand in the present that must be met if those ideals are going to be realized on any level. Since the future ideal is maximizing importance, then according to Whitehead's understanding of morality, this claim is also a moral in nature. As Henning argued using William James and I argued using Heschel, once a claim is made, then we are obligated to meet it. Thus, since this claim is moral in nature, it sets up a moral obligation to meet it. If we have a responsibility to maximize importance, then we have a moral obligation.

The Prophetic Aim

When it comes to building a Process Prophetic, this new understanding of morality in Whitehead has even larger implications. If we look at Whitehead's morality through the future/present relation, we open the possibility that his system is prophetic in nature. When it comes to morality, future ideals are governed by Whitehead's "general ideal" and set the parameters for certain moral judgments. Those judgments, however, are made in the present. Thus, future ideals influence our ethical actions now. Through this commitment to ethical ideals

(presented in the future context), an ethical aim is created. From that aim we get ethical purpose. Thus, the future gives us an ethical purpose that can be felt in the present and emerges out of the system itself. I call this aim that drives ethical purpose the Prophetic Aim.

Like all aims in Whitehead, the Prophetic Aim motivates us to a certain goal or end, but this Aim is ethical in nature. The Prophetic Aim has transformative power because the future is something worth fighting for. For Whitehead, value itself must be actual and finite. Only something that exists can have value. This means, technically, the future isn't "valuable" in the same way. But the future does exert a certain power. The possible value in the future is worth striving for, and because the future is worth it, it has the power to transform the present in its attempt to reach it. By driving for future value, we are able to realize more value in the present. By aiming at something with potential value, we work to realize greater value now.

The notion of a Prophetic Aim fits within Whitehead's Category of Subjective Intensity. This particular categorical obligation has everything to do with the subjective aim. The subjective aim aims at satisfaction or intensity for a given occasion of experience. Whitehead believed that all experience was purposive, that "each occasion 'aims' at achieving some value."[314] This does not refer to value in general, but rather to "some particular realization of value that is possible in that situation."[315] Each occasion has a sense of purpose toward some realization of value according to its own particular context. That sense of purpose is the subjective aim.

What is important to emphasize is that the subjective aim is twofold. According to Whitehead, it aims "at intensity of feeling (a) in the immediate subject, and (b) in the relevant

[314] John Cobb, *Whitehead Word Book* (Claremont: P&F Press, 2008), 58.
[315] Cobb, *Whitehead Word Book*, 58.

future."[316] This means that, for every occasion of experience, there are two interests playing out at the same time. The first is the occasion seeking out the interests for its own immediate satisfaction. The second introduces the possibility that the occasion also seeks out interest beyond itself. As Griffin puts it, "an occasion of experience . . . does not aim solely at its own enjoyment; it also intends to influence the future."[317] Both aspects of the subjective aim are related to and affect each other. But if we only consider aiming at our own enjoyment, we run the danger of moving Whitehead's morality into the realm of an egoist or moral interest theory. When we consider the intent to influence the future, however, we open the door to a substantially different option.

When it comes to Whitehead's understanding of the subjective aim (as well as importance), several individuals have accused him of a type of egoism or moral interest theory. In critiquing Whitehead's relation between morality and importance, Paul Schilpp stated that Whitehead's understanding of morality can be shared by "psychological moralists," and ultimately described Whitehead's views of morality as a "moral interest theory." Schilpp is convinced the label fits because Whitehead "does intend to give to the notion of importance, even in his much broader and profounder sense of the word than it bears in ordinary language, a defiantly emotional and subjective flavor."[318] Schilpp's conclusion emerged out of his interpretation of Whitehead's use of the notion of "interest" in importance. Interest as an aspect of importance focuses on the unity and higher intensities for the individual. In Whitehead's understanding of importance and morality, Schilpp sees an emotional and subjective explanation centered around the needs of the individual. He goes on to say that "from this particular vantage

[316] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 27.
[317] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 307.
[318] Schilpp, "Whitehead's Moral Philosophy," 572.

point Professor Whitehead's moral philosophy could well be classed among the so-called 'moral interest theories.'"[319] If Whitehead's notion of importance was solely based on the aspect of "interest," many could argue that Schilpp would be correct. From this perspective, the moral interest theory description makes sense. The rules of morality are governed by the emotional and subjective needs of the individual.

However, the fact that Whitehead's notion of importance is not solely based on the aspect of interest contradicts Schilpp's conclusion. As discussed earlier, Whitehead's notion of importance is broken up into two aspects, "interest" and "importance." The former may be concerned with the "individuality of the details," but the latter is concerned with the "unity of the universe."[320] This means that focusing on the individual may be one aspect of importance, but the other aspect focuses on everything but the individual. Brian Henning rebutted Schilpp directly when he stated that "insofar as Whitehead sees morality, logic, religion, and art as merely a handful of the 'innumerable species' of importance, it is evident that Whitehead uses the term in a much wider and more fundamental sense than mere interest."[321] This "wider and more fundamental sense" is the aspect of Whitehead's morality that Schilpp is missing. The role importance plays in Whitehead's system is a drive or motivation toward higher intensity, and that drive is not merely focused on the individual. In the end, Schilpp focuses on the wrong aspect of importance. Yes, individual interests are there, but so are the interests of the entire universe. By making this a part of importance, Whitehead adds a purposefulness that urges each of us

[319] Schilpp, "Whitehead's Moral Philosophy," 571.
[320] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 8.
[321] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 128.

beyond our own individual interests. This leads Henning to conclude that it is completely "inappropriate to classify Whitehead's morality as a subjectivist moral interest theory."[322]

This coincides with David Griffin's conclusion that Schilpp incorrectly interpreted the subjective aim in the same way he misinterpreted importance. He states that Schilpp's "classification is not wrong," per se, and understands that a narrow interpretation in regard to individual interests of the subjective aim "could suggest that Whitehead provided a *private*-interest theory."[323] Thus, if we only considered the aspect of the subjective aim that aims at intensity for the individual, Schilpp would be on to something. This would make sense because the interests involved would only be for the individual. This is what Griffin means by a "private-interest theory." Griffin points out, however, that Schilpp ignored that the "whole point of Whitehead's position is that the aim of religious and moral education should be to *enlarge* our interests so that they include the interests of others."[324] What Schilpp ignored is the aspect of the subjective aim dealing with the "relevant future." This second aspect has implications that prove Whitehead was not just considering private interests, but also interests that go far beyond the individual. The incorporation of the "relevant future" is what "enlarges" our interests to include, not just the interest of others, but the whole world. As Henning argued in regard to the wider interpretation of importance, Griffin's wider interpretation of the subjective aim moves the morality of Whitehead well away from a mere moral interest theory.

This notion of enlarging our interests through the "relevant future" aspect of the subjective aim, not only contradicts Schilpp's assessment, but also gives a clue as to where the Prophetic Aim comes in. The key here is to understand what Whitehead meant by "relevant

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[322] Henning, *Ethics of Creativity*, 128.
[323] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 306.
[324] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 306.

future." Whitehead explained that "the relevant future consists of those elements in the anticipated future which are felt with effective intensity by the present subject by reason of the real possibility for them to be derived from itself."[325] Basically, our actions now can anticipate a certain result in our future. As Griffin points out, this idea coincides with the choices we make in our daily lives. Whether we donate time to a local charity or put away money for retirement, such actions in the present are specifically influencing a result in the future. Conversely, an expectation in the future (sending my kids to college) specifically influences our actions in the present. Either way, this means that the relevant future for an occasion of experience does depend on the occasion itself, but the "immediate enjoyment" for that occasion "can be significantly constituted by [its] anticipation that the present moment will affect the future in a particular way."[326] This second aspect of the subjective aim that "influences the future" is where the Prophetic Aim comes in.

Regarding the subjective aim, Cobb states that "Whitehead suggests that morality always has to do with taking into account the larger rather than the more limited future."[327] The subjective aim may aim at *some* value, but the Prophetic Aim is an aim at a *specific* value. They are both aiming at value, but as an aim toward a specific ideal of value (meaning maximizing beauty), the Prophetic Aim definitely falls under the second aspect of the subjective aim – an occasion aiming at value beyond itself. The Prophetic Aim emerges out of the specific ideal of the future, and that ideal has everything to do with maximizing importance. This means that the Prophetic Aim is urging us to choose the "larger" rather than the "more limited" future. Griffin explains that, for Whitehead, "morality primarily involves the question of *how much* of the future

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[325] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 27.
[326] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 307
[327] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 64.

– of the world that will in fact be affected by our present decision – we take into account in making this decision and *how* we intend this present decision to influence those future events."[328] Since the Prophetic Aim pushes us to consider the "larger" futures that should be taken into account for each occasion, it widens even further "*how much* of the future" must be taken into consideration when we make our decisions in the present. As a purpose toward the wider relevant future, the Prophetic Aim can invoke alternative possibilities for the immediate subject. It can come from the intensity of feeling of what is possible given the immediate context. It is "the feeling of what might be and is not."[329] This is the essence of the Prophetic Aim. The specific ideal of maximizing importance (or beauty) in the relevant future promotes alternatives in the present. The Prophetic Aim may be considered to be a specific aspect of the subjective aim, but since the Prophetic Aim is aiming at the ideal to maximize importance, it is also ethical or moral in nature.

Both Griffin and Cobb agree that a tension exists when the two aspects of the subjective aim are applied to morality. Going back to Cobb's statement that "morality always has to do with taking into account the larger rather than the more limited future," the comparison of the larger rather than the more limited future creates a tension.[330] He goes on to explain that, "the tendency of the moralist is always to insist upon the wider horizons, whereas individuals tend to relapse into narrower ones."[331] The tension emerges out of the choice to either stay within our own "narrow" interests, or look beyond ourselves to the "wider horizons." It basically comes down to what we might call "doing the right thing." Going back to Whitehead's comment that

[328] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 307
[329] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 273.
[330] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 64.
[331] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 64.

"morality of outlook is inseparably conjoined with generality of outlook," the right thing appears to be choosing actions that promote the maximum beauty overall, not just for ourselves.[332] Cobb puts it well when he asks, "Do we adventure only for our own sake . . or can humanity as a whole enter into our vision?"[333]

Griffin calls this the tension between duty and desire. He observes that "we typically seek our own satisfactions, even if by so doing we detract from, rather than contribute to, the common good."[334] This indeed, is the heart of the problem. It's not that we need to put the satisfaction of others before ours, it's that we should be taking the satisfaction of others into account along with our own. This is where the real tension lies. Or, as Griffin puts it, "[i]nsofar as we nevertheless feel that we *should* act otherwise, we feel the well-known tension between duty and desire."[335]

Both Cobb and Griffin agree that this tension can be transcended. Griffin specifically says this tension "is not metaphysically necessitated but can in principle be transcended."[336] Going back to Whitehead's statement that moral outlook is conjoined with the generality of outlook, they argue that the tension would indeed be transcended once the individual puts his/her particular outlook in line with the general outlook. If there is no difference between one's own interest and that of the general good, then the tension no longer exists. In the end, both agree that this becomes the goal of morality.

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[332] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 15.
[333] Cobb, *Christian Natural Theology*, 64.
[334] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 307
[335] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 307
[336] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 307

Although I would agree that the tension between duty and desire does exist, I would argue that the possibility of transcendence does nothing to resolve the tension. In fact, that is the whole reason the tension exists. Should we choose the general good, or do we keep our vision narrow? This is where the Prophetic Aim comes into play. Griffin stated that the tension was not metaphysically necessitated, but I disagree. If the Prophetic Aim is a purpose toward the wider vision of the future (or, as Griffin puts it, the common good), then it is promoting purpose toward the wider good over the narrow vision. This feeds the tension that exists between duty and desire. This tension is a continuation of the tension of contrasts that creates higher intensities and higher harmonies within experience. It is a definite part of Whitehead's aesthetic system. Beauty emerges out of the tension created out of contrasts, and the tension between duty and desire, prompted by the Prophetic Aim, is another example of that.

In addition, this activity is distinctly moral in nature. It seeks to control the process so as to maximize the ideal (or importance), which fits Whitehead's definition of morality. Whitehead goes on to state that the "greater part of morality hinges on the determination of relevance in the future."[337] As an urge toward intensity beyond ourselves, the Prophetic Aim urges us to choose duty over desire. It urges us to keep our obligation by telling us that we have a responsibility to the future. Or, in more Whiteheadian terms, we have a responsibility to the most beautiful.

In looking at Whitehead through the lens of Heschel's prophetic, a prophetic nature can be found within Process thinking. In light of the Prophetic Aim and the future/present relationship, we can now see that a prophetic nature can exist within Whitehead's metaphysics. Going back to Heschel's view of the prophets, he stated that, "The prophet was an individual

[337] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 27.

who said No to his society, condemning its habits and assumptions, its complacency, waywardness and syncretism."[338] The prophets forcefully challenged the standard and norms of their day, and their primary fight was against the structures that promoted and upheld injustice. Since the prophets felt compelled to question society, the prophetic tradition is characterized by a drive for constant change and improvement. From this, Heschel argued that the function of the prophet was not about telling the future, but about challenging the present. The prophets, however, did use the future to motivate the present. They were able to use a possible future to motivate society, in their own time, towards ethical action and justice. Out of this motivation emerged the will to challenge, question, and say no to the societal structure that upheld injustice.

A direct parallel can be made with our new understanding of Whitehead. We now understand that future ideals offer possibilities that can affect our decision making in the present. These future possibilities set up a particular future/present relation. That relation produces an aim that motivates us toward challenge and ethical action. With the new understanding of moral action, justice, and obligation in Whitehead, we now have a system that promotes the challenging and questioning of society. All three have to do with the same action and participate in the same dynamic activity. It all comes down to being a participant in the system. To seek justice is a moral action. Moral action participates in justice. Finally, both culminate in an obligation to participate through the future/present relation. All of these emerge out of motivation that is presented through a possible future. In this way, the future/present relation in Whitehead's metaphysics can be understood as prophetic in nature. Just like the prophets using a

[338] Heschel, *Prophets*, xix.

possible future to motivate ethical action in their time, within Whitehead's philosophy a possible future exists that can motivate ethical action in our own time.

With the current state of Jewish thinking, Marc Ellis has called for a return to the ethical tradition of the Jewish prophetic as the next stage of Jewish thought. I believe a Process Prophetic is very well suited to be that next stage. The combination of Heschel and Whitehead, not only satisfies the demands of Ellis himself, but also puts forth a viable ethical foundation that can fit with today's reality. A Process Prophetic offers a sustainable ethical tradition that is relational and adaptable to the secular/scientific outlook of American Jews today.

God

With Whitehead's moral philosophy interpreted through Heschel's ethical model, we have come far in building a Process Prophetic. We have not, however, answered Olan's demand for a model of God that also fits with that same outlook. In Chapter Two, we explored the limits of the classical model of God used by Heschel in his understanding of the prophetic. Such limits are at the heart of Olan's critique and this project cannot succeed until those limits are addressed. In Chapter One, we explored Whitehead's understanding of God, but we have yet to explore how Whitehead's model of God could be interpreted to sustain a prophetic tradition. Whitehead's model of God does meet the demands of Olan for a model that is both relational and indeterminate, but the question remains whether Whitehead's model of God can work with Heschel. Can Whitehead's model of God add the necessary elements to Heschel's theism to pass the test for Olan, but at the same time hold up under Heschel's prophetic vision?

Process God of Pathos

The process model for God is already set up to support Heschel's concept of a "God of pathos." This is because Whitehead's understanding of God emerged out of his process-relational system. So, if Heschel wants to argue for a relational God that has a reciprocal relation to the people of Israel, the process model is uniquely set up to offer a metaphysic that can make it work. By applying Whitehead's understanding of God to Heschel's God of pathos, we will find that all of the necessary elements for the God of pathos can be fulfilled. At the same time, however, Whitehead's model for God is dynamic and possesses both the relational and indeterminate elements necessary to support our current cultural outlook.

In the most basic terms, Heschel argues for a God of "concern and involvement." He goes on to state that God's pathos demands a "living care" and denotes a "dynamic relation between God and man," in which "God is effected by human action."[339] All of these parameters are vital for Heschel's view of how the prophetic faith functions. He states that the "characteristic of the prophet" is the "insight into the present pathos of God."[340] God is the foundation to everything the prophets are attempting to do and communicate. Thus, the elements of pathos mentioned above cannot be abandoned. With Whitehead, we do not have to abandon any element of the God of pathos. Whitehead's model of God is not only compatible with Heschel's views, but can give it the metaphysical backing needed to allow for indeterminacy as well as relation.

The two natures of God, as well as the initial aim, are the embodiment of Heschel's concern and involvement. When it comes to God's "concern," Heschel is seeking a God who is

[339] Heschel, *Prophets*, 224.
[340] Heschel, *Prophets*, 231.

affected by human action, a God who feels and cares about human beings and human activity. This can be explained through God's consequent nature. Whitehead describes the consequent nature of God as "conscious, and it is the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom."[341] The consequent nature of God is the part that takes in every possible experience of the actual world. This means that everything that happens in the world, including human action, is experienced in God. Since every actual occasion, every possible experience in the world is taken in and objectified by God, it means that God shares every aspect, every feeling, in our world. The incredible value of God's consequent nature is that nothing is lost because it is incorporated into God's unity. The consequent nature can be understood as God's ultimate concern.

When it comes to "involvement," Heschel is seeking a God who is in constant engagement with humanity. This can be explained through God's primordial nature. God's primordial nature is described as the "primary action of God in the world" and as "the principle whereby there is initiated a definite outcome from a situation otherwise riddled with ambiguity."[342] It is through the primordial nature that God is active in the world, and through which God urges creation onward, as the base of every actual occasion of experience. "He is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feeling at the base of things; so that, by reason of this primordial actuality, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation."[343] It is through God's primordial nature that the infinite possibilities that exist in God (as eternal objects) are ordered. It is though this ordering that God is able to determine what is best for each one of us. It is through God's primordial nature that these best possibilities are

[341] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.
[342] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.
[343] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 344.

offered to each of us through the initial aim. Through the initial aim, God's ever present urging toward higher value results in God's involvement in every aspect of the world. This is how God's concern for the world manifests itself.

As discussed in Chapter One, when it comes to understanding this model of God, it is key to understand how these two natures are in a constant state of integration. As quoted before, "[t]he perfection of God's subjective aim, derived from the completeness of his primordial nature, issues into the character of his consequent nature. In it there is no loss, no obstruction. The world is felt in a union of immediacy."[344] What makes God work is God's ability to hold the contrasts presented by the finite world together with God's infinite being. By integrating and holding both natures together, God forms a never-ending, constantly evolving vision of existence. Putting these two natures together creates a model of God that is completely dynamic. It is a model that fits with indeterminacy present in the reality of our own existence.

The process understanding of God culminates in the "living care" that Heschel's notion of pathos demands. Through the constant integration of both natures, God is able to present the world with the best possibilities for its own unification toward higher value. This means that God is present to all aspects of creation, urging each entity to its best unified transformations, through God's initial aim. Thus, God is a constant "living" (moving, evolving, changing, and integrating) presence in the world whose "care" permeates into every aspect of our existence. This model for God sets up a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between God and humanity. Each one has an effect on the other, and both strive toward the same goals. By infusing Heschel's vision of God with Whiteheadian metaphysics, we create a structure that explains the

[344] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 347.

dynamism of God that also fits with a modern scientific outlook. There no longer exists a clash between how we understand God and how we understand the workings of our reality. Thus, we can re-connect with the prophetic tradition and the perspective it puts forth.

As a source of connection that Heschel was attempting to achieve, God can now be understood as the giving and receiving of energy that creates a truly dynamic relationship between God and the world. "God gives to the world and receives from the world; the world receives from God and gives to God, ever in interdependent exchange."[345] This means that God is not just acting in the world, but interacting with the world. God is not a mere presence in the world, nor is God an active presence pressing its will on the world. God is an interacting presence that works in and with the world.

By combining the notion of God's presence with God's touch, God becomes a force in the world that is in deep communion with every being on this planet. For humanity, God becomes the creative force in the world that urges every human being to be the best of who they are, in whatever situation they are in. In order for this to happen, the touch of God must be applicable to each situation we find ourselves in. This means that "God's touch to the world in every instant is contextualized not only by the divine character, but also by the conditions in the world that affect the way each element in the world can be."[346] God, by being omnipresent, knows not only my situation, but all other situations that affect my own. In this way, God knows my context better that I can. By having this perspective, God is able to communicate and guide me in ways I could not accomplish on my own.

[345] Suchocki, *In God's Presence*, 24.
[346] Suchocki, *In God's Presence*, 24.

What does this mean for the evil experienced in our lives? It means that, at any point in our lives, we can turn to God because God is always present to us. When tragedy strikes, God is always there, touching us with the best way in which to incorporate that evil event and be transformed by it. God is there to show us how to come to a new way of being, in spite of the evil presented to us. We can have faith that, through God's presence and God's touch, the love of God is an ever present reality in our lives. Whether we realize it or not, we are constantly wrapped in the love of God that pervades every aspect of the universe.

The Morality of God

David Griffin argues that "[t]he ideal moral beauty" is "central to the divine aims for distinctively human experience."[347] To argue this, he turns to *Adventure of Ideas* where Whitehead states that moral beauty (along with intellectual beauty and sensible beauty) "partake[s] in the highest ideal of satisfaction possible for actual realization, and in this sense can be termed that beauty which provides the final contentment for the Eros of the Universe."[348] In using the phase Eros of the Universe, Whitehead is referring to the primordial vision toward which God is urging all of existence. I believe this also indicates that the primordial nature of God includes morality. If God orders the best possibilities for every individual in the universe within the primordial nature, then part of the "judging" of what the best possibilities could be, contains a moral component. Griffin concludes that "[t]he ideal of moral beauty. . . pervades the universe as fully as do mathematical and logical notions, being prehensible wherever there

[347] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 299.
[348] Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 11.

are beings capable of prehending it."[349] This "ideal of moral beauty" originates in the primordial vision of God, thus indicating the morality of God.

There are two conclusions to draw from this. First, if God plays a necessary role in morality, then it means that God is moral. Not only is morality a central component of God's primordial nature, but God's actions in the world are moral as well. If morality is understood as the control of process so as to maximize beauty and importance, and the primordial vision is the ideal of maximizing beauty and importance, then the primordial vision absolutely necessary in working toward that ideal. Through the initial aim, God is offering the ideal which makes the control of process toward maximizing beauty and importance possible. By doing this, God's actions are moral and are pervasive throughout the universe.

The second conclusion we can draw is that the primordial vision from God sets the ideals that are necessary for the Prophetic Aim. Although never stated explicitly in his writings, Whitehead offers several clues as to what role the primordial vision plays in his understanding of ethics. The biggest clue is when Whitehead states that "morality of outlook is inseparably conjoined with generality of outlook."[350] This generality of outlook is governed by the primordial vision. The aim of ethics in Whitehead has everything to do with the aim of his entire system. In *Modes of Thought*, he explains that behavior should be governed by the "essential character" of the universe. He goes on to explain that morals "aim at the general ideal," and have to do with the "control of process" to "maximize importance."[351] These concepts surrounding morality have to do with Whitehead's aesthetic foundation to his system, which means they all have to do with achieving the ideal of value (and beauty) in the world. This has

[349] Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 299.
[350] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 15.
[351] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 13-14.

everything to do with the Prophetic Aim. The Prophetic Aim is based on those ideals that motivate the present when it comes to moral action. This is also what separates the Prophetic Aim from the initial aim. The initial aim is what offers the ideal of maximizing beauty. Once the ideal is offered, then a separate aim is created to achieve it. Consider it the second stage in the process. Once the ideal is put forth, then the purpose found in the Prophetic Aim (as the future component of the subjective aim) begins a motivation towards that ideal. This second stage (as Prophetic Aim), is what helps control the process to achieve it, which makes it moral.

God as the source of Justice

In relation to the prophetic, Heschel makes it clear that "it is because God is the source of justice that His pathos is ethical."[352] If we want to describe God as the source of justice in Whitehead, we need to go back to our understanding of justice in his system. As we have learned, Justice is not a "thing" in the system, but part of the system itself. It is a system built on tensions and contrasts. Being able to exist within those tensions and contrasts means embracing the "in-between" space, created by them, that allows for change. By seeking out those "in-between" spaces, we bring about justice by allowing for the possibility for improvement.

What role could God play in this, especially when we are talking about something that is an activity, rather than a "thing"? The answer comes from how God works in the system based on tensions and contrasts. Mainly, how do these tensions and contrasts come about? Contrasts emerge when there is a disruption to the system, which then creates discordant elements within the existing harmony. These disruptions occur when a novel element is introduced. Once

[352] Heschel, *Prophets*, 225.

introduced, the system of contrasts plays itself out. As a novel element is introduced, the discordant element must be dealt with by the society or nexus. This "dealing" with it may produce positive or negative results, but the possibility for transformation now emerges. Once these new transformations occur, the society or nexus finds a new level of intensity and harmony – until it is disrupted once again.

So where is God in all of this? First of all, God is the source of all novelty in this system. In explaining the relation between God and novelty, Whitehead states quite clearly that "apart from God, there can be no relevant novelty."[353] He would also go on to explain that "God is the organ of novelty, aiming at intensification."[354] Through the envisagement of God's primordial vision, God creates the possibility for something new to emerge. This introduction of novelty begins the chain of events that lead to discord and contrasts. By fulfilling this function, God is the necessary element that sustains the system. This means that the process of continual tensions and contrasts, which is necessary for our understanding of justice, is sustained through the actions of God. Without novelty, the never-ending flux of existence grinds to a halt. Without it, there can be no exploration into new possibility. As Whitehead puts it, "Apart from the intervention of God, there could be nothing new in the world, and no order in the world. The course of creation would be a dead level of ineffectiveness, with all balance and intensity progressively excluded by the cross currents of incompatibility."[355] As the source of the system of contrasts and tension, God is also the source of justice.

In the end, the Prophetic Aim gives process to Heschel's relation. Using Olan's terminology, in addition to Heschel's relationality, the Prophetic Aim allows for the

[353] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 164.
[354] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 67.
[355] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 247.

indeterminacy of our reality. By completing a model that is fully intelligible to our current culture, religious meaning can be re-incorporated into the American Jewish life. This is the heart of the transformation of the prophetic faith. The Prophetic Aim offers a new source of purpose and meaning that re-invents the prophetic outlook.

Covenant

Our new interpretation also has great impact on how Jews understand the covenant. In rejecting the foundation of the traditional notions of God, Sandra Lubarsky also had to reject the traditional notion of Covenant. In her article "Toward a Dynamic Relational Judaism," she states, "Here is the heart of the matter: in the Jewish tradition, it is God's love that arouses loyalty and faithfulness, not God's power."[356] At the core of Lubarsky's argument is a re-evaluation of God's power through Process thinking, and it applies directly to our reinterpretation of the prophetic. She goes on to state that "[o]ne of the reasons why Process Theology is of such value to Jewish thought is because it carefully deconstructs the notion of omnipotence and equally carefully constructs the notion of divine concern."[357] Lubarsky incorporates the Process understanding that God cannot be all-powerful, and thus have all of the power. Lubarsky understands that, once we are able to break free from the notions of divine power, we can begin to understand God and the covenant in a completely new way. This new perspective can be built on ideas of love and concern for creation, not domination over it.

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[356] Sandra B. Lubarsky, "Toward a Dynamic Relational Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* 62 (2010-2011): 58.

[357] Lubarsky, "Toward a Dynamic Relational Judaism," 59.

As a Process thinker, Lubarsky sees God as a dynamic force in our lives. She goes on to point out that our dynamic relationship with God is already part of Jewish tradition. She states that within the Jewish tradition "the covenantal relationship is shown to be an ongoing conversation between God and humanity in which ethical principles and correct moral conduct are negotiated, clarified, and exemplified."[358] In looking at the biblical figures of Jacob, Abraham, and many of the prophets, we can see the notion of being in conversation with God as deeply engrained in Jewish tradition. Lubarsky wants to expand that traditional notion to incorporate a more dynamic understanding of how that relationship works.

Lubarsky points out that "Process Thought replaces substances with events . . . In event metaphysics, reality is understood as being fundamentally 'in process,' a constant flow of events that interact dynamically."[359] She then goes on to observe that "[i]n line with modern physics, a process metaphysics replaces the notion of static, predictable, material units of reality with patterns of energy participating in ceaseless change. In line with evolutionary thinking, it affirms that change is a fundamental process of life."[360] As we have found with quantum physics, our entire existence is based on dynamic relationships. With these observations, Lubarsky exemplifies Olan's position that our religious perspective must fit with our scientific culture.

Lubarsky argues that this dynamic system works well for re-envisioning the covenant. "The biblical response to covenant was radical amazement and, within the Jewish tradition, the covenant has been understood to be a truly amazing foundation of life. That God is a being who loves and cares and is affected by relationships, who is engaged in the co-creative, intimate,

[358] Lubarsky, "Toward a Dynamic Relational Judaism," 61.
[359] Lubarsky, "Toward a Dynamic Relational Judaism," 63.
[360] Lubarsky, "Toward a Dynamic Relational Judaism," 63.

dynamic relationship, gives rise to these core religious emotions."[361] With this statement, Lubarsky hits the center of the issue. These "core religious emotions" are what connect us to our religious and spiritual realities. It was exactly these emotions that were cut out of our religious lives by the highly rationalist philosophies of the Enlightenment. Thus, by re-introducing these core religious emotions, we are able to reconnect to our religious traditions and perspectives. With a Process understanding of the covenant as a caring and dynamic relationship, the Jewish people can find a deeply emotional connection to God and their tradition that fits with their modern worldview. By doing all of this, Jews can now feel connected to their tradition without sacrificing their modern perspective. In the end, this meets Heschel's criteria of finding meaning though the understanding of God and the covenant. It shows how the process-relational God still works with the covenant and meaning can still be discovered through the "core religious emotions" expressed in the relation set up by the covenant.

[361] Lubarsky, "Toward a Dynamic Relational Judaism," 64.

Chapter 5 - A Path Toward the Process Prophetic

The goal of this project was set down by Marc Ellis and Levi Olan. Ellis argued for a return to the ethical tradition of the Jewish prophetic. In looking at the state of modern Jewish thinking, he concluded that the Jewish prophetic needed to be the next phase. He based his argument on the idea that modern Jews have let go of their ethical roots and thus their connection to Judaism. By returning to the ethical tradition contained within the Jewish prophetic, we can right the ship when it comes to the perspectives of modern Jews. Returning to the prophetic would prove difficult, however, with the claim by Olan that modern Jews are in a theological crisis, in addition to an ethical one. Olan recognized that, since the classical understanding of God no longer fit within our current world view, a new understanding of God was necessary for the survival of any prophetic tradition.

Put together, both set the parameters of what this project was attempting to achieve. If a return to the Jewish prophetic was going to the be the next phase of Jewish thinking, then the goal was to reinterpret the prophetic tradition so that it could hold up against both ethical and theistic critiques. My argument for a Process Prophetic is the final outcome of that goal. With a Process Prophetic, we have a tradition that can incorporate a new understanding of God without sacrificing the ethical perspective that defines the Jewish prophetic.

If the Process Prophetic is going to be the next phase of Jewish thinking, then we must figure out how it fits into the larger Jewish conversation. To accomplish this, we first need to explore what the current conversation is. If we want to jump into a serious discussion of Jewish thinking, at some point the Holocaust must be addressed. This is especially true of current Jewish identity. The thinking on this is clear – the events the Jews experienced during the Holocaust were so horrific that they must cast doubt on some of the most basic tenets of the

Jewish God and the covenant. For this reason, the Holocaust has come to be understood as a seminal event in Jewish history. No matter what position you take on the theological implications of the Holocaust, the reality of it must be addressed. Even with the writers who argue there is no reason to doubt Jewish understanding in light of the Holocaust, they are none-the-less addressing the doubt presented by the event. In fact, since the Holocaust, Jewish thinkers have been judged by how well they address it (or don't address it) in their thinking. The Holocaust is the lens through which contemporary Jewish thinking is understood.

If the Holocaust must be addressed, then what does that look like today? As we stand now, we are seventy years removed from it. Does that amount of time affect how we address the Holocaust and how we must respond to it? Has anything changed? Has enough time gone by to move to a different phase where new questions must be asked? As we observed in the introduction, Marc Ellis stated that the "task before Jews in every generation is to know enough to ask the right questions for their time."[362] So, seventy years after the Holocaust, what are the questions confronting this generation?

A Brief Development of Post-Holocaust Thought

Before we can answer these questions, we must take into account the development of post-Holocaust thinking. To find out where we stand now, we need to take brief look at how we got here. Although it is not possible to recount all of post-Holocaust thinking, it may be useful to briefly look at a particular lineage of thought. There are three individuals whose thinking can demonstrate the evolution of ideas in the post-Holocaust conversation. Each one was able to

[362] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 106.

challenge the thinking of their generation and move beyond their predecessors to address a particular need of their particular time.

Although the line of thought could go back even further, I think it is important to start with Heschel. As we have seen, Heschel is significant because of his ability to both break with tradition and hold on to it at the same time. He saw the need for a deeper spiritual connection within the rabbinic tradition. To accomplish this, he reshaped the understanding of how the Jewish people relate to God and how God works in human history.

As we saw in Chapter One, Heschel's conception is based on his notion of God's "pathos." By calling God "the God of pathos," Heschel sets up a relational understanding of God. His notion of God "leads to the basic affirmation that God is interested in human history, that every deed and event in the world concerns Him and arouses His reaction."[363] Through this perspective, Heschel is establishing God as one who is deeply connected with humanity and cares about human activity. Heschel also allows for God to be affected by the world, especially by human action. He states that "God is concerned about the world and shares in its fate," and that "God has a willingness to be intimately involved in the history of man."[364] Heschel's notion of a God fully involved in human life and history is in stark contrast to many Jewish thinkers of his day. By introducing the idea of God's pathos, Heschel was able to infuse a sense of spirituality that was missing in the more traditional notions of God.

For many Jews, however, Heschel's sense of spirituality is not possible after the events of the Holocaust. The idea that God is "interested in human history" or "concerned about the

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[363] Abraham Heschel, *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1959), 118.
[364] Heschel, *Prophets*, 225.

world," is very hard to accept after the horrors of Auschwitz. As one who lost a good portion of his family in the Holocaust, Heschel in no way ignores or denies the tragedy suffered by the Jewish people. He simply chose to hold onto his understanding of God in the face of such tragedy. We now know that, while fully acknowledging the events of the Holocaust, Heschel believed that the rabbinic understanding of Judaism should remain, and that the covenant between God and the people of Israel is still in place. For Heschel, the Holocaust was the production of human hands and behavior. It was the turning away from God that allowed for the horrors. Heschel argued that the presence of God still exists, but it is up to us to seek God out. He stated that, "God will return to us when we are willing to let Him in – into our banks and factories, into our Congress and clubs, into our homes and theaters."[365] The redemption of the world is still the goal of God, but what is required is for humanity to turn back to God and do its part to get there. For this reason, Heschel argued that rabbinic Judaism cannot be abandoned.

Eventually, what might be considered the generation following Heschel felt compelled to directly address the reality of the Holocaust and its theological implications. In reacting to the horrors of the Holocaust, Richard Rubenstein along with others such as Emil Fackenheim, Irving Greenberg, and Elie Wiesel, emerged as leading voices in the conversation. All offered very different and unique perspectives, but they were mostly in agreement in several respects. First, each saw the understanding of God in light of the Holocaust as the main crisis for all Jewry. For this reason, they all agreed that a response was absolutely necessary. As Rubenstein stated, "I am convinced that the problem of God and the death camps is the central problem of Jewish theology in the twentieth century."[366] With respect to God, Jews of the world must come up with

[365] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 111.
[366] Richard Rubenstein, "Symposium on Jewish Belief," in *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to the Nazi Extermination*, ed. Michael Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 92.

a response to such atrocities. The question was how, and this is where their different perspectives emerged.

Rubenstein represents one particular side of the equation. From his perspective, in light of the Holocaust, we must finally let go of the traditional understanding of God. The horrors of Auschwitz convinced Rubenstein the Jewish understanding of the God of history could not be accurate. By invoking Nietzsche, Rubenstein agreed that we have reached the age when God is dead. "Ours is the time of the death of God. That time which Nietzsche's madman has said was too far off has come upon us. I understood the meaning of the death of God when I understood the meaning of Auschwitz and Madjdanek."[367] This is not to say that Rubenstein thinks that God does not exist. He has just given up any hope that God exists in the traditional way Jews have understood God. For Rubenstein, the event of the Holocaust marks the end of rabbinic Judaism as currently formulated. He boldly states, "I do not believe that a theistic God is necessary for Jewish religious life."[368] Rubenstein concluded that God does not act in history and thus there are no confessional aspects to Judaism. Since God obviously takes no interest in our history, there is nothing to confess to. Although he does argue that Judaism must continue, he argues it as a pathway based on culture and psychology. Rubenstein recognizes that it was the institution he was born into, and thus it is the most comforting way in which he can express his way of being an "authentic human being."[369] Rubenstein chose to be a Jew because, for him, the ritual and community is the most satisfying way to share in life's moments (both good and bad). Thus, remaining a Jew is his response to the Holocaust, not because of any lofty purpose, but because it is the best way for him (and others) to communally process and heal from that crisis.

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[367] Rubenstein, "Symposium on Jewish Belief," 93.
[368] Rubenstein, "Symposium on Jewish Belief," 95.
[369] Rubenstein, "Symposium on Jewish Belief," 93.

Rubenstein is important in this line of inquiry specifically because he was a student of Heschel. In looking at Rubenstein's particular standpoint, it's clear that he officially broke from his former teacher. In fact, he suggested that Heschel's perspective was dangerous for the future of Judaism. Starting from the position that rabbinic Judaism has failed the Jewish people, Rubenstein feared that Heschel's perspective would lead to a "lapse into nostalgia" that no longer functioned to protect the Jews.[370] For Rubenstein, in a post-Holocaust world, Jewish survival could not be found in holding on to an idealized past, but rather in looking to a future solidifying Jewish empowerment. The Jewish religion itself has a purpose, just not a confessional one. Rubenstein chose to focus on the social and functional aspects of Judaism, especially the formation of the state of Israel.

In comparing Rubenstein with Heschel, Marc Ellis made the observation that, although Rubenstein could not match the Jewish learning of his teacher, he "knew enough to ask the questions that were necessary for the next generation."[371] In responding to the Holocaust, Ellis argues that Rubenstein's lack of knowledge worked to his benefit. By not being as immersed in the Jewish tradition as Heschel, Rubenstein was able to see things from a different perspective. In doing so, he was able to ask the questions that Heschel could not. Further, Rubenstein was able to challenge his own tradition in ways that Heschel never could. Such challenges were necessary to move beyond the most horrific event of Rubenstein's generation.

As a student of Rubenstein, Ellis finds himself in a position similar to that of Heschel and Rubenstein. He states that, "Clearly, most of my generation, like Rubenstein's before mine, lack the Jewish knowledge that Heschel had," and that his generation "also lacks the Jewish

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[370] Ellis, *Encountering the Jewish Future*, 111.
[371] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 79.

knowledge that Rubenstein has."[372] But, as with Rubenstein, this lack of knowledge can be beneficial. Ellis goes on to explain that this lack of knowledge "has freed some Jews to cultivate the knowledge they need for the challenges of Jewish life that neither Heschel nor Rubenstein could foresee."[373] Ellis sees major challenges facing his generation of Jewish thinkers. These may be an extension of the challenge of the generation before him, and solutions may require his generation to move beyond his predecessors.

Ellis also broke with his teacher regarding an event that would shape Ellis' generation. For Ellis, Rubenstein's positions on the Holocaust were of vital importance because they informed how the Jewish world reacted and compartmentalized the events that would follow after the Holocaust, namely, the creation and the actions of the state of Israel. As a student of Rubenstein, Ellis fully understood the role the Holocaust must play in Jewish thinking, but from his perspective another question arose. As a generation beyond Rubenstein, the formation and the actions of the state of Israel become relevant in the post-Holocaust discussion. Ellis begins to explore the role the Holocaust plays in justifying the actions of the state of Israel, especially when those actions are unethical or unjust.

More specifically, Ellis takes a hard look at the policies and actions Israel has taken against the Palestinian people. As Israel works to solidify its interests as a nation state, Ellis questions the ethical legitimacy of its actions. "Today, many Jews in and outside of Israel realize that 'Never Again' means more than Jewish survival. Historically, it meant the displacement of Palestinians and Palestine in the creation of the state of Israel."[374] Ellis goes on to explain that this displacement, as well as the methods used by Israel to carry it out, are highly unethical. In

[372] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 79.
[373] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 79.
[374] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 3.

its efforts to solidify its own interests, the state of Israel is knowingly and purposely causing suffering on a massive scale.

A New Development in Post-Holocaust Thought

Within this criticism, Ellis pushes the post-Holocaust conversation into a new arena. He explores how the event of the Holocaust has been used to justify what he considers great injustices against the Palestinians. In the end, he asks a very specific question. Is the fact that Jews have suffered in the Holocaust enough to justify the suffering of others at the hands of Jews? This question completely reframes the influence the Holocaust has on Jewish thought and it becomes the basis for his critique of Israel, as well as of Jewish thought in general. Ellis argues that "the challenge for Jews today is simply put: What does it mean to be Jewish after the mass murder of the Jews of Europe, the empowerment of the Jews after the Holocaust in the Jewish state, and the systematic and ongoing displacement of the Palestinian people?"[375] For Ellis, as time has moved on, the post-Holocaust conversation has to move forward and other events must be considered in judging Jewish thought. We must realize that these events are related and each (for better or worse) has great influence on the other. Failing to recognize this may result in a disconnect that validates injustice and oppression at the hands of the Jewish state, all of which, in the end, calls the entire Jewish ethical tradition into question.

This view is very controversial and, like Heschel and Rubenstein in their own time, Ellis challenges the thinking of his time. In doing so, he moves beyond his teachers (Rubenstein included) who were unable to ask the necessary questions. This is what brought Ellis to question

[375] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 80.

the Jewish ethical tradition. In light of the actions of the Jewish state, and the reasons Jews in and outside of Israel use to justify them, Ellis was forced to ask the question, "Is there anything ethical left in the Jewish life worth saving?"[376] Ellis asks this question because there seems to be a clear disconnect between the tradition founded on the implementation of ethics and justice and the actions of those who represent that particular tradition. There are those within the Jewish community who look back at the oppression of the Holocaust and cry "never again," but in the next breath fully support, or at least condone, actions that go against their own tradition and lead to the oppression of others. This is why Ellis observed that, with the facts of contemporary Jewish life shifting to ones of privilege and power, "more and more Jews believe that the Jewish ethical tradition has been outsourced."[377] In the end, Ellis feels compelled to ask questions about whether Jews in the US and Israel, from a privileged perspective, connect with their ethical roots at all.

When it comes to contemporary Jewish life, most Jews enjoy a social position that is very different from the one experienced by Jews after the Holocaust. With the creation and prosperity of the Jewish state of Israel, as well as the stature of Jews in American society, can we now accurately sum up the Jewish situation as estranged or oppressed in any way? As of 2017, over 80% of the world's Jews reside in Israel (44.4%) and the United States (39.3%).[378] That means over 80% of the worlds Jews live in countries that dominate their respective regions both economically and militarily.

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[376] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 4.
[377] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 3.
[378] "World Jewish Population," The American-Israeli Cooperative Exercise, Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 14, 2019, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewpop.html.

The US has worked very hard over the last hundred years to maintain its economic interests throughout the globe. It does this by incorporating other countries into its economic model. Whether it's through protecting its corporate interests in Central and South America (going all the way back to the 19th century), enacting the Marshall Plan after World War Two, or spreading its influence in the Middle East, the US has done a very good job in implementing an economic system that maintains it global dominance. In this way, the US is a fantastic example of what has been called Neo-Imperialism.

It is important to note that a significant portion of the world's Jews are an integral part of the system implemented by the US. As Americans, Jews in the US have become affluent and powerful. More than that, they use their positions in society to protect and maintain that system. As with most people in America, Jews are not exactly on the bottom (especially compared with how people live outside the US). For all of these reasons, Jews are no longer strangers within this system. They are an integral part of it. In addition, many Jews in America now stand on the opposite side of the inequality situation. They are now the ones on top looking down.

The current state of Israel presents a powerful image of Jewish might. Not only has Israel become prosperous enough to enjoy the fruits of economic power, many can argue that it has become oppressive. With the expansion of Israel into Palestinian territories (as well as the treatment of the Palestinians at the hands of the Israelis), the Jewish state is accused of playing the role of conqueror, oppressor, and even murderer. In response to the role of Israel in the Palestinian conflict, Ellis offers this observation:

> Surely something has happened to Jews in this century – in the Holocaust, in the birth of Israel, in the occupation and destruction of historic Palestine – that has changed Jews as a people. The militarization of Jewish culture, psyches, and religiosity over the last fifty

> years cannot be understood or reversed instantaneously. The Israeli-Palestinian accords . . . will, unless expanded considerably, do little to help Jews understand what they have done, what they are capable of, and who they have become as a people.[379]

Observations like this are made when individuals can see the effects of one group powerful enough to force their will on another. The Jews in Israel and America are no longer outside Western society or on the bottom. For most of the last two thousand years, this could not be said of the majority of Jews, but the situation has changed.

This is the current status of the post-Holocaust conversation. How do Jews today contend with the reality of the Holocaust as well as Jewish empowerment through the state of Israel and the United States, especially when the first is used to justify the unjust and unethical actions of the second? Ellis goes on to state that the "shattering of the Jewish ethical tradition has consequences," and fears that the "ethical sources of Jewish life are becoming distant. Increasingly, Jewish youth throw up their hands in despair. Apathy becomes the norm."[380] This is where the true consequences come into play. With each new generation, Jews become more disconnected, not just from the ethical roots in Judaism, but from the entire tradition. They no longer see the point, and this greatly impacts the post-Holocaust conversation. Without the ethical roots of Judaism, the event of the Holocaust becomes a propaganda tool to justify the oppression of others. As Ellis says, "Today, Jewish learning is incomplete if we only know how we were oppressed," and that "[i]f injustice is committed in the name of the Holocaust, the Holocaust itself becomes a safe harbor from our own accountability."[381] Thus, to continue the

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[379] Marc Ellis, *Unholy Alliance: Religion and Atrocity in Our Time* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1997), 3.

[380] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 3.

[381] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 84.

Holocaust conversation we can't distance ourselves from the ethical tradition within Judaism. In fact, when it comes to framing the Holocaust in our current context, we need it more than ever.

This is what eventually leads Ellis to conclude that the Jewish prophetic needs to be the next stage of post-Holocaust Jewish thinking. He believes the prophetic tradition contains the ethical roots necessary to meet the challenges faced by Judaism today. When Ellis observed that "there is no getting around the prophetic," and that "the prophetic stalks the world," he understands that the prophetic is exactly what Jewish thinkers need right now.[382] It forces them to take a look and ethically judge their own perspectives. Ellis believes that "what Jews have accomplished in the post-Holocaust era stands under prophetic judgment."[383] As the next stage, it can urge the conversation forward and allow Jews today to confront both the events of the Holocaust and Israel.

I am in full agreement with Ellis that the prophetic must be the next phase of post-Holocaust thinking. But if we compare Heschel's description of the prophets as a "disturbing" force for change with the descriptions by Ellis and Nuesner, there seems to be a discrepancy. Neusner argues that the prophetic tradition has lost its energy and Ellis asks if there is anything left in the ethical tradition at all. Compared with Heschel's vision of the prophetic, it becomes clear that one position does not fit with the other. If we want to return to the prophetic as the next stage in post-Holocaust thought, this discrepancy must be addressed.

[382] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 6.
[383] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 6.

What a Process Prophetic Looks Like

This project has been an attempt to see if the prophetic tradition can be reinterpreted and transformed into an ethical force that can fulfill the position required by Ellis. The combination of Heschel and Whitehead comes together to reinterpret and revitalize the prophetic tradition. The power of the Prophetic Aim is the power of transformation. It transforms the prophetic vision, as well as the role of the prophet itself. The Prophetic Aim directly confronts the "apathy becomes the norm" situation presented by Ellis. It does this by creating ethical purpose and motivation to break Jews from their apathy.

Traditionally, prophecy usually referred to predicting the future. But for the prophets, any foretelling of the future was to promote action in the present. Through the Prophetic Aim, the role of the prophet stays the same. The prophet still has a vision of the future, but there is just a primary shift in perspective. The prophets' vision of the future is not a prediction, it is a motivation for change. It is a vision to transform the present. Moral action, justice, and obligation all participate in the same activity – transforming our present situations for the better. This is the shift in perspective necessary to re-energize the prophetic tradition.

Whitehead states that moral notions, religion, and aesthetics "are the disrupting and the energizing forces of civilization."[384] This is the role the prophet plays in human history. It is the person who disrupts social structures through challenging them. Since the prophets were the ones "who said No to [their] society," and condemned "its habits and assumptions, its

[384] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 19.

complacency, waywardness and syncretism," their primary fight was against, not just injustice, but the structures that promoted and upheld injustice.[385]

To illustrate what this looks like, we stay with Ellis and look at his argument for what he calls "Jews of Conscience." In his article "Can Jews Be Radical Theologians," Martin Kavka offers the possibility that Jews can act as radical theologians.[386] In response to Kavka, Ellis agreed that Jews can be radical theologians, but in a very different way than Kavka was proposing. Ellis argued that radical theology was deeply rooted in both Jewish theology and history. As Ellis sees it, throughout Jewish history, there has always existed a tension in Judaism, which he calls a "civil war" of sorts.[387] This civil war is rooted in the relationship that Judaism has with empire building. At different stages in Jewish history, building and maintaining an empire was necessary for Jewish longevity and security. During these times, however, a tension did emerge. Ellis argues that Jews were often "caught between the twin poles of empire."[388] There were those Jews who charted empire on the one hand, and those who opposed it on the other. Empires are often built on the oppression and suffering of others. According to Ellis, Jewish radical theologians emerged out of this tension as the ones who fought for the oppressed. For this reason, Ellis states that "radical theologians have no choice but to side with those who suffer under empire."[389]

In these moments of radical theology, Ellis argues, Jews must often "move outside a specifically theological framework."[390] He observed that, when certain events would intervene

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[385] Heschel, *Prophets*, xxix.
[386] Martin Kavka, "Can Jews Be Radical Theologians?" *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 95 no. 1 (2012), 47-71.
[387] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 82.
[388] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 84.
[389] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 82.
[390] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 83.

in Jewish life, it would alter the "theological possibilities for the Jewish community."[391] Radical theologians, then, were the ones who were able to push the theological boundaries of their own time to adapt to the events of history. Through their reinterpretations they were able to fortify their own theological perspective against the powers of empire.

Ellis goes onto argue that, if Jewish radical theology existed in the past, then it "begs the question of the origins of that radicalism."[392] For Ellis, "clearly, the Jewish origins of that radicalism are found in the originating core of Jewishness, the prophetic," and that the prophetic is "the truly indigenous Jewish reality and the greatest gift that the Jews have bequeathed to history."[393] Throughout Jewish history, out of the tension between the two poles of empire come those who questioned and challenged the status quo. Within the Jewish tradition, these individuals are understood to be the prophets. Ellis himself links the prophetic tradition of challenging the status quo all the way back to Moses, who challenged the Pharaoh to stop the oppression of the Israelites. Ellis goes on to observe that the prophets "are constant. They are insistent. They are as unrelenting as Moses' original demand to free the Israelites from bondage. Judgment is going to happen, The prophets say, 'Watch out!'"[394] This is why "no one in the world wants the prophetic," because "justice is hard, especially for those benefitting from injustice."[395] In the tension between those who oppress individuals in the name of empire and those who fight against such oppression, it is the prophet who emerges as the challenger and instigator on behalf of the oppressed.

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[391] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 82.
[392] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 83.
[393] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 84.
[394] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 115.
[395] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 116.

Ellis then applies his understanding of radical theology (i.e. the prophetic) to what he considers the current situation in post-Holocaust thinking. As the next stage in the post-Holocaust conversation, he argues that the Jewish prophetic can be applied to today's situation between the state of Israel and the Palestinians. In our modern context, the Jewish state of Israel is the empire and the Palestinians are those who are oppressed in the name of securing that empire.

Like other times in Jewish history when radical Jewish theologians had to move beyond the theological framework of their time, Ellis argues we have reached that point yet again. Most Jews would argue that the Holocaust was the most recent event in Jewish history to require such a change. Ellis would not dispute this, but he also takes the challenge further. He argues that the formation and actions of the state of Israel constitute another event that must be considered. Since the structures of rabbinic Judaism have come to sustain and justify the actions taken by Israel, Ellis argues that it is time to "move outside the Rabbinic framework that has dominated Jewish life for more than two millennia."[396] This is why the prophetic is truly necessary today and needs to be the next stage of the post-Holocaust discussion. It is the framework that can confront the reality of empire that exists in current Jewish life.

Ellis recognizes that not all Jews in and outside of Israel agree with the current situation. This is where his internal "civil war" analysis comes into play. The ongoing tension between the poles of empire exists today and Ellis delineates the two opposing camps. He calls "Constantinian Jews" those Jews who support Israel and believe that its actions are necessary for its continuing security. Those who oppose such actions and are willing to fight them (sometimes

[396] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 83.

at great cost), Ellis calls "Jews of Conscience." Or, in other words, empire Jews vs. prophetic Jews.[397]

I agree with Ellis that Jews of Conscience embody the prophetic tradition. Going even further, I argue that, as an embodiment of the prophetic, Jews of Conscience fit with the Prophetic Aim as well as the reinterpretation of Heschel's ethical dimension.

Moral Action

Through our reinterpretation of Heschel, we found that the Prophetic Aim motivated moral action by setting up a blueprint for achieving higher intensity and value. We need to attempt to do what is necessary now to reach the ideals of the future. This means that, once we know what ideal we want to reach, we can backtrack and look at what actions are necessary to get there. Although the ideals may shift, this does not take away from the fact that action is needed for change.

Thus, in the Israeli/Palestinian situation, what is the ideal outcome? The ideal is to end the suffering experienced by the Palestinians and allow for a situation in which both groups are secure enough to thrive and prosper. It is obviously going to be incredibly difficult to reach such an ideal, especially with the various levels of self-interest on both sides. Some would even say that reaching such an ideal is impossible. This might actually be true, but the essence of the Prophetic Aim is that even if that ideal is never reached, the progress achieved by the attempt to reach it can create real change and value in the present. If we just throw up our hands and give

[397] Ellis, "Studying Our Oppression," 84.

up, the current situation of suffering continues. Action must be taken, even if such action appears to be a futile attempt.

This is how the Jews of Conscience fulfill the prophetic role. These individuals are willing, in the face of insurmountable odds and cost, to act. They are willing to push against the momentum of the situation and strive for change and improvement. Thus, Jews of Conscience are active participants in improving the world in which we live. Or in terms of Whitehead, by acting now and pushing toward the ideal, these individuals are controlling the process in such a way as to achieve higher value. Through my interpretation of the prophetic, this makes the actions by the Jews of Conscience moral. In the end, their actions promote value that will eventually be seen in the lives of the Palestinians, once the oppression and suffering end.

Justice

This also make the actions of the Jews of Conscience just. Just actions are those actions that open up the future by creating a space in which change can happen. This is done through disruption. Prophets are agents of change that promote justice through interference. By being a discordant element that disrupts the status quo, the prophet is able to open up the possibility for change and improvement. This is exactly what the Jews of Conscience are attempting to do.

In the United States, as well as in Israel, speaking out against the actions of the state of Israel is very unpopular. Many who have spoken out, even though they may be Jews themselves, have been labeled anti-Semitic. With a large and strong Jewish presence in the US, the support for the security of Israel is understandable. It can also be argued that, at the beginning of its creation, that support was justified. In the decades following its creation, Israel faced several

opposing nations that sought Israel's destruction. As time has passed, however, Israel's situation has become increasingly complex, especially with respect to the Palestinian population. But the unwavering support for Israel's security has not changed. The idea that Israel needs to be supported at all costs has become the status quo. Even with the evidence of oppression and mistreatment of the Palestinians, the status quo dictates these actions are of minor importance in the face of Israeli security.

As Jews of Conscience confront this status quo, they are being just in the fact that only though that confrontation can a space be created in which change is possible. As Ellis points out, the average American Jew is now fully integrated into American culture. This means that American Jews, for some time, have been in the position of privilege and power.[398] From the perspective of privilege, it is very difficult to see any point of view other than the one needed to maintain that privilege. If that privilege is maintained by the status quo, then any challenge to that status quo is met with fierce opposition. If suffering and oppression are a result of that status quo, then the prophets are the ones who sees the need to interfere. As the voices fighting the status quo, they are the discordant element that disrupts the situation in order to allow for change to happen. Or, in Whiteheadian terms, Jews of Conscience work as an element of discord that disrupts the harmony maintained by the status quo. Only through this disruption can higher harmonies be found to increase value. In this case, the value of the Palestinians must be considered in the higher harmony. The Jews of Conscience are being just through their actions by creating a space where a new conception of Israeli/Palestinian relations can be considered.

[398] Ellis, *Future of the Prophetic*, 4.

Obligation

In the context of the Prophetic Aim, Heschel's understanding of ethical obligation through claim and responsibility applies to the future and the present. The future lays a claim that the present is responsible to answer. The claim comes out of the possible ideals in the future that compel us to act in the present. In the context of the current Israeli/Palestinian situation, we can see this relationship in the future generations of children who look back at us and rightly judge us for not acting. The Jews of Conscience are fully aware of this particular relation. The future generations are exactly what they are fighting for.

In the end, the prophetic means engagement. "Prophetic utterance is rarely cryptic, it is urging, alarming, forcing onward, as if the words gushed forth from the heart of God, seeking entrance to the heart and mind of man, carrying a summons as well as an involvement."[399] A prophet, by definition, is fully engaged. If you take engagement out, all purpose goes with it. If the prophet does not participate in the system, only stagnation will result. Without engagement, the prophet does not make sense; there is no prophetic. This is exactly what this reinterpretation is fighting against.

In light of the Prophetic Aim, the most fundamental element of the prophetic tradition is the understanding that all of us are prophets. Not only does this re-imagined prophetic fit into our modern culture, it is transformed into a tradition we can all participate in. Any one of us, at any time, can play the role of the prophet. If we allow ourselves to look, we can see a wondrous vision of the future and we can allow that vision to fill us with purpose. This purpose leads us toward moral action and justice. All we have to do is act. Once the action is taken, the

[399] Heschel, *Prophets*, 7.

participation begins. Understood in this way, the prophetic tradition has plenty of "nerve" to go around, because we all participate in it. As an integral part of who we are and of our ever-changing reality, the prophetic energy is limitless.

Since we live in a process-relational universe, this process has an effect on all of us. By actualizing God's aim and sending it back to God, we not only affect God, but we also start to affect those who are around us. When we find ourselves faced with tragedy and oppression, the degradation, caused by such injustice, can affect all of society. When we act as prophets by actualizing God's ideals for our society, we begin to affect the people closest to us in the same fashion. Those who experience our actions can then see it as a call to act themselves. This is the final culmination of the transformation of ourselves and the true overcoming of evil in our world. Once we act as prophets and begin actualizing God's ideals for us, we become transformed and begin the process of transforming those around us. Instead of tumbling toward elimination and death, we begin to push forward and upward toward love and justice.

Incorporation and transformation are how we, as human beings, need to respond to the reality of evil in our world. We can do this through deep faith in God because God's ideal for each us can show us the way. If we follow Kushner, and ask "what now?" as a call to action, we can overcome the effects of evil, not only for ourselves, but for our entire planet. When we open ourselves to the Prophetic Aim, we become "co-laborers with God, exercising [our] influence in conjunction with God's greater aim toward deeper modes of human communities of caring."[400] By acting on this Aim, we then become one action by which God's ideals can be expressed in the world. We become the vehicle by which God's love is actualized in the world.

[400] Suchocki, *In God's Presence*, 28.

This notion of God also forces a necessary shift in understanding the role of God and humanity in the world. If God cannot unilaterally bring about justice in the world, then perhaps God can turn to us to find it. Harold Kushner noted a conversation he once had with David Griffin. He recalled Griffin saying, "Maybe God is all-powerful but God's power is not the power to coerces but the power to enable." This brought Kushner to conclude that, "God can do anything, but only through human and other instruments."[401] From this insight, Kushner chose to focus on the description of God as fire in Jewish scripture. "Fire is not an object: fire is a process, the process by which the latent energy in a lump of coal or a log of wood is turning into actual energy. God is like fire, liberating the potential energy in each of us."[402] If the implementation of God's love and justice in the world cannot come from God directly, perhaps it can come from God working through us. When we have courage to acknowledge the responsibility presented to us by the Prophetic Aim, our own potential can be realized. Through a Process Prophetic, perhaps that "potential energy" can be realized, and God's vision *for* the world can be expressed *to* the world through us. If each individual can do this, then perhaps as a Jewish community, we can work to realize and actualize the potential transformations for the entire world.

[401] Kushner, "Would an All-Powerful God Be Worthy of Worship?," 91.
[402] Kushner, "Would an All-Powerful God Be Worthy of Worship?," 91.

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